

**Touchstones REACH**

***Touchstones REACH* (Religious Education Arts Clearing House)**

**Lifespan RE Resources for God / The Divine**

**Introduction**

This packet provides resources on the theme of God /the Divine. While God is only directly referenced in our 4th source: “Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God’s love by loving our neighbors as ourselves,” it is implicit in other principles and sources. Our first principle, “The inherent worth and dignity of every person,” recalls the concept of *Imago Dei*, that humans are made in the image of God. Our seventh principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part,” points to the God of Process Theology, which some understand as being coequal with the universe.

Our first source, “Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life,” refers to the *mysterium tremendum*, the powerful sense of experiencing God. The second source, “Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love,” includes transforming love, which captures the understanding that Jesus taught of God as love. Our third source, “Wisdom from the world’s religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life,” points to many sources, including *Sophia*, the Greek Goddess of Wisdom. Finally, our sixth source, “Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature,” lifts up the idea of God in nature, which is known as pantheism.

In terms of religious education, it may be that for Unitarian Universalists, literacy about God is more important than belief in God. One objective of God literacy is to be exposed to diverse notions of God that go far beyond the old man with a beard in the sky. Children’s diverse concepts of God are wonderfully described below in reading **3.1: God Is**…. Please also note the Appendix, which offers definitions for a range of God concepts. God literacy is valuable because children are not forced to believe before they understand, thus freedom of belief is honored.

While the faith stance of many Unitarian Universalists is that of religious humanism, belief in God still appears to be significant based on Pew Surveys of American Religion. When you dig deeper, however, Unitarian Universalists define God in many different ways.

Grappling with the idea of God is challenging, especially for younger children. One way to spark curiosity and openness to different concepts of God is by sharing creation myths from different cultures. To that end, this packet lists a number of books about different creation myths. Also see the *List of 25 Creation Stories From Around The World* at <https://list25.com/25-creation-stories-from-around-the-world/>

Relative to the Big Bang and evolution see *K—12 Programs on Cosmic & Life Evolution* by Connie Barlow at <http://www.thegreatstory.org/kids-connie.html>.

A valuable resource for parents who do not believe in God is the book *Relax, It’s Just God: How and Why to Talk to Your Kids About Religion When You’re Not Religious* by Wendy Thomas Russell. As one review notes, “With a thoughtful voice infused with humor, author Wendy Thomas Russell seamlessly merges scientific thought, scholarly research, and everyday experience in a book that gives nonreligious parents a toolkit to assist with their unique and complex issues. Among other things, *Relax, It’s Just God* teaches parents how to avoid indoctrination; communicate openly but kindly with religious relatives; confront and manage ‘religious baggage’ so as to not hand it on to the next generation; talk about death without the familiar comforts of religious imagery; give kids a broad overview of various world religions; and show children how to practice true religious tolerance while also vaccinating them against the intolerance of others.”

**List of Resources**

**1.0: Pins**

**2.0: Children’s Homilies, Sermons, Time for All Ages & Resources**

**3.0: Wisdom Stories about God / The Divine** (509 words)

**3.1:***God Is…* compiled by Tirrell H. Kimball of the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist

**3.2:** *Why and Where God Hides* (309 words)

**3.3:** *God in Hiding,*an ancient tale retold by Rev. Beth Chronister (276 words)

# 3.4: *Hide-and-Seek with God* by Mary Ann Moore (704 words)

**3.5:** *The Wandering Teacher* (252 words)

**3.6:** *Seven People Cutting Stones* by Roger Walsh (270 words)

***Creation Stories***

**3.7:** *Maui and Pele Create Hawai’I* (474 words)

**3.8:** *Night: a creation story from the Banks Islands in Melanesia* (714 words)

**Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists**

**3.9:** Excerpt from Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of Dr. George de Benneville (1,026 words)

**3.10:** *Hosea Ballou’s Conversion* (577 words)

**3.11:** *Augusta Jane Chapin’s Call to Ministry* by Polly Peterson (799 words)

**3.12:** *Reason, Science, and the Question of God* (944 words)

**3.13:** *Forrest Church’s Redemption Experiences* by Rev. Dr. Forrest Church (1,482 words)

**3.14:** *Doctrinal Freedom* (392 words)

***World Religions***

**3.15:** *St. Francis and the Wolf* by John Feister (571words)

**3.16:** *The Gates of the Forest* by Elie Wiesel (238 words)

**3.17:** *The Picture on The Kitchen Wall* by Rev. Sophia Lyon Fahs (1,304 words)

**3.18:** *The Wise Fool* (226 words)

**3.19:** *Muhammad of Makkah* (532 words)

***Stories from Scripture***

**3.20:** *Creation* (835 words)

**3.21:** *Noah’s Wife, The Story of Naamah* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (1,096 words)

**3.22:** *Nathan Confronts David* (339 words)

**3.24:** *Manna in the Wilderness* (798 words)

**3.25:** *The Binding of Isaac* (374 words)

**3.26:** *Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham* (1,042 words)

**3.27:** *Isaiah—Exile and Hope* (417 words)

**3.28:** Job, Based on Hebrew scripture (640 words)

**3.29:** *The Battle of Jericho* (1,160 words)

**3.30:** *Jesus Teaches the Beatitudes* (347 words)

***Other***

**3.31:** *From Scientific Law to Kants Moral Law* (553 words)

**4.0: Children’s Books about God / Goddess / The Divine, Creation, and Gaia**

# *God / Goddess / The Divine*

# 4.1: *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* by Carole Boston Weatherford, author and Kadir Nelson, illustrator (2006)

# 4.2: *Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman* by Alan Schroeder, author and Jerry Pinkney, illustrator (2000)

**4.3:** *Ladder to the Moon* by Maya Soetoro-Ng, author and Yuyi Morales, illustrator (2011)

# 4.4: *What Is God*? by Etan Boritzer, author and Robbie Marantz, illustrator (1990)

# 4.5: *On the Day You Were Born* by Debra Frasier, author (1993)

# 4.6: *Ilyas and Duck Search for Allah* by Omar S. Khawaja, author and Leo Antolini, illustrator (2012)

**4.7:** *Ganesha’s Sweet Tooth* by Sanjay Patel & Emily Haynes, authors and Sanjay Patel, illustrator (2012

# 4.8: *Maybe God Is Like That Too* by Jennifer Grant, author and Benjamin Schipper, illustrator (2017)

# 4.9: *Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood, author and Cheng-Khee Chee, illustrator (2007)

# 4.10: *Does God Have a Big Toe? Stories About Stories in the Bible* by Marc Gellman, author and Oscar de Mejo, illustrator (1989)

# 4.11: *God’s Paintbrush* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, author and Annette Compton, illustrator (1992)

# 4.12: *When God Was A Little Girl*: *A Story About God, Creation, and What it Means to be Human* by David R. Weiss, author and Joan Lindeman, illustrator (2015)

# 4.13: *Where’s Buddha?* by Marisa Aragón Ware (2019)

# 4.14: *The Apple Tree: The Prophet Says Series* by Mariam Al-Kalby, author and Yee Von Chan, illustrator (2013)

# 4.15: *God’s Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu & Douglas Carlton Abrams, authors and LeUyen Pham, illustrator (2008)

**4.16:** *God in Between* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, author and Sally Sweetland, illustrator (1998)

# *Creation*

# 4.17: *Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story*: Book 1 by Jennifer Morgan, author and Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator (2002)

# 4.18: *From Lava to Life: The Universe Tells Our Earth Story: Book 2* by Jennifer Morgan, author and Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator (2003)

# 4.19: *Mammals Who Morph: The Universe Tells Our Evolution Story Book 3* by Jennifer Morgan, author and Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator (2006)

# 4.20: *Older Than the Stars* by Karen C. Fox, author and Nancy Davis, illustrator (2010)

**4.21:** *Mr. and Mrs. God in the Creation Kitchen* by Nancy Wood, author and Timothy Basil Ering, illustrator (2005)

**4.22:** *Why the Snake Crawls on its Belly* by Eric Kimmel, author and Allen Davis, illustrator (2001)

**4.23:** *First Light, First Life: A Worldwide Creation Story* by Paul Fleischman, author and Julie Paschkis, illustrator

**4.24:** *How the Tiny People Grew Tall: An Original Creation Tale* by Nancy Wood, author and Rebecca Walsh, illustrator (2005)

**4.25:** *The Golden Flower: A Taino Myth from Puerto Rico* by Nina Jaffe, author and Enrique O. Sanchez, illustrator (2005)

**4.26:** *When Woman Became the Sea: A Costa Rican Creation Myth* by Susan Strauss, author and Cristina Acosta, illustrator (1998)

**4.27:** *The Coming of Night: A Yoruba Creation Myth from West Africa* by James Riordan, author and Jenny Stow, illustrator (2011)

**4.28:** *Head, Body, Legs: A Story from Liberia* by Won-Ldy Paye & Margaret H. Lippert, authors, and Julie Paschkis, illustrator (2005)

**4.29:** *Piecing Earth and Sky Together: A Creation Story from the Mien Tribe of Laos* by Nancy Raines Day, author and Genna Panzarella, illustrator (2001)

**4.30:** *Mama God, Papa God: A Caribbean Tale* by Richardo Keens-Douglas, author and Stefan Czernecki, illustrator (1999)

**4.31:** *Ola Na Iwi: I Am Hawaii: A Hawaiian Creation Story for Children Inspired by the Kumulipo* by Kimo Armitage, author and many illustrators including Michael Q. Ceballos & Matthew Kawika Ortiz (2016)

**4.32:** *Big Momma Makes the World* by Phyllis Root, author and Helen Oxenbury, illustrator (2002)

**4.33:***Kojiki: The Birth of Japan* by Kazumi Wilds, author (2019)

# *Gaia*

# 4.34: *Playing with Gaia: discovering the spirit of Mother Earth* by Cindy Bowen, author and Twila Jefferson, illustrator (2009)

# 4.35: *Everything is Connected* by Jason Gruhl, author and Ignasi Font, illustrator (2019)

**5.0: Music & Videos for Children (no resources identified)**

**6.0: Curriculum & Theme-Based Classroom Activities for Children for Authority, Leadership, and Power**

# *from Tapestry of Faith*

**6.1: Wonderful Welcome: A Program for Children Grades K-1**

**6.1.1:** *Session 8: The Gift of Families*

**6.1.2:** *Session 9: The Gift of Mutual Sharing*

**6.2: World of Wonder: A Program on the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism for Grades K-1**

**6.2.1:** *Session 8: Life-Giving Plants*

**6.3: Creating Home: A Program on Developing a Sense of Home Grounded in Faith for Grades K-1**

**6.3.1:** *Session 15: Muhammad*

**6.4: Love Surrounds Us: A Program on the UU Principles and Beloved Community for Grades K-1**

**6.4.1:** *Session 2: Love Surrounds Us Sharing*

**6.5: Toolbox of Faith: A Program That Helps Children Discover the Uses of Faith for Grades 4-5**

**6.5.1:** *Session 5: Reflection (Mirror)*

**6.6: Amazing Grace: A Program about Exploring Right and Wrong for Grade 6**

**6.6.1:** *Session 6: The First U*

**6.6.2:** *Session 10: Right and Wrong Together*

**6.7: Riddle and Middle: A Program on the Big Questions for Grade 6**

**6.7.1:** *Session 4: Thinking of God*

**6.8: Miracles: A Multigenerational Program on Living in Awe and Wonder**

**6.8.1:** *Session 1: Naming Miracles*

**6.9: Wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures: A Multigenerational Program**

**6.9.1:** *Workshop 1: David and Goliath*

**6.9.2:** *Workshop 2: David and Nathan - You are That Man*

**6.9.3:** *Workshop 3: Manna in the Wilderness*

**6.9.4:** *Workshop 4: The Battle of Jericho*

**6.9.5:** *Workshop 5: Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham*

**6.9.6:***Workshop 6: The Binding of Isaac*

**6.9.7:** *Workshop 8: Creation*

**Resources for Youth & Adults**

**7.0: Reflections, Readings, Stories & Poetry**

**7.1:** *God* by Rumi

**7.2:** *Your Deepest Identity* by James Martin (131 words)

**7.3:** *The Mind of God* by Stephen Hawking (107 words)

**7.4:** *The God Debate* by Nathan Schneider (204 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

**7.5:** *Godless Yet Good* by Troy Jollimore (266 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

**7.6:** *Einstein’s God Does Not Play Dice* by Jim Baggott (387 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

**7.7:** *Finding God* by James Martin (199 words)

**7.8:** *Can God Lie?* by Dallas G. Denery II (312 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

**7.9:** *Torch, Bucket of Water, or Beauty?* by Barbara Brown (122 words)

**7.10:** *Radical Amazement* by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (268 words)

**7.11:** *The Threshold You Are Crossing* by Michael Quattrone (291 words)

**7.12:** *Staying in Your Own Business* by Byron Katie (208 words)

**7.13:** *Is the Universe Friendly?* by Albert Einstein (202 words)

**7.14:***Song of the Soul* by Kahlil Gibran (251 words)

**7.15:** *The Murmur of the Sea* by Kent Nerburn (265 words)

**7.16:** *Power of Blessing* by Rachel Naomi Remen (256 words)

**7.17:** *Counting on Our Ultimate Concern* by Sharon Salzberg (231 words)

**7.18:** *Radical Response* by [M. Scott Peck](http://www.awakin.org/read/index.php?op=author&sel=M.+Scott+Peck) (171 words)

**7.19:** *God and We Evolve* by Deepak Chopra (270 words)

**7.20:** *Making Every Day a Prayer* by Kathy Coffey (249 words)

**7.21:** *God Lives* by [James Kavanaugh](https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/search?author_first=James&author_last=Kavanaugh) (194 words)

**7.22:** *Pictures of God* by Lauren Winner (259 words)

**7.23:** *Got Faith?* by Niles Elliot Goldstein (155 words)

**7.24:** *Will You Open the Door of Your Heart?* by Mirabai Starr (373 words)

**7.25:** *No Choice in the Matter* by Desmond Tutu (263 words)

**7.26:** *Envisioning God in New Ways* by Kirk Byron Jones (190 words)

**7.27:** *The Value of Doubt to Faith* by Irma Zaleski (263 words)

**7.28:** *Other Religions as Sources of Wisdom* by J. Philip Wogaman (955 words)

**8.0: Curriculum & Theme-Based Classroom Activities for Youth & Adults**

***Youth***

**A Tapestry of Faith**

**8.1: A Place of Wholeness: A Program for Youth Exploring Their Own Unitarian Universalist Faith Journeys**

**8.1.1:** *Workshop 7: Reason*

**8.2: Building Bridges: A World Religions Program for 8th to 9th Grades**

**8.2.1:** *Workshop 11: Christianity 1*

**8.2.2:** *Workshop 12: Christianity 2*

**8.2.3:** *Workshop 16: Evangelical Christianity*

***Adults***

**8.3: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope: Who, Me, and Elder? An Adult Program**

**8.3.1:** *Workshop 3: Diving Through the Layers – The Fabric of My Life*

**8.4: What Moves Us: A Unitarian Universalist Theology Program for Adults**

The following workshops explore the aspects of God in UU history.

**8.4.1:** *Workshop 1: George de Benneville*

**8.4.2:** *Workshop 3: Hosea Ballou*

**8.4.3:** *Workshop 4: William Ellery Channing*

**8.4.4:** *Workshop 6: Sophia Lyon Fahs*

**8.4.5:** *Workshop 7: James Luther Adams*

**8.4.6:** *Workshop 8: Forrest Church*

**8.5: What We Choose: An Adult Program on Ethics for Unitarian Universalists**

**8.5.1:** *Workshop 1: The Locus of Moral Authority*

**8.5.2:** *Workshop 2: Unchanging Truths*

**9.0: Popular Music**

# 9.1: *Losing My Religion* by REM (4:54)

# 9.2: *By the Grace of God* by Katy Perry (4:40)

# 9.3: *Wings of an Angel* by Sarah McLachlan (4:33)

# 9.4: *Laughing With* by Regina Spektor (3:16)

# 9.5: *God is a River* by Peter Mayer (4:04)

# 9.6: *Everything is Holy Now* by Peter Mayer (4:55)

# 9.7: *The Garden* by Peter Mayer (3:46)

# 9.8: *My Soul* by Peter Mayer (4:50)

# 9.9: *The Birthday Party* by Peter Mayer (4:49)

# 9.10: *Church of the Earth* by Peter Mayer (5:00)

# 9.11: *My Sweet Lord* by George Harrison (4:49)

# 9.12: *River of Dreams* by Billy Joel (4:09)

# 9.13: *Loves Me Like a Rock* by Paul Simon (3:18)

# 9.14: *Jesus Take the Wheel* by Carrie Underwood (3:44)

# 9.15: *You Found Me* by The Fray (4:01)

# 9.16: *What If God Was One of Us* by Joan Osbourne (5:01)

# 9.17: *Day by Day* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:11)

# 9.18: *Prepare Ye* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (2:11)

# 9.19: *Save the People* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:38)

# 9.20: *Bless the Lord* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:38)

# 9.21: *All Good Gifts* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:27)

# 9.22: *By My Side* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:40)

# 9.23: *American Jesus* by Bad Religion (3:17)

# 9.24: *All in It* by Justin Bieber (3:46)

# 9.25: *Nobody* by Selena Gomez (3:42)

# 9.26: *Dear God* by Nick Jonas (3:53)

# 9.27: *God is a DJ* by Pink (1:50)

# 9.28: *You Raise Me Up* by Josh Groban (4:59)

# 9.29: *Pocketful of Sunshine* of Natasha Bedingfield (3:00)

# 9.30: *Fix You* by Coldplay (4:55)

# 9.31: *What I’ve Done* by Linkin Park (3:27)

# 9.32: *Bittersweet Symphony* by The Verve (4:37)

# 9.33: *Lord Give Me a Sign* by DMX (3:37)

# 9.34: *Call the Man* by Celine Dion (6:08)

# 9.35: *Jesus Walks* by Kanye West (3:54)

# 9.36: *Unanswered Prayers* by Garth Brooks (3:28)

# 9.37: *Learn to Fly* by Foo Fighters (3:57)

# 9.38: *Turn! Turn! Turn!* by The Byrds (3:57)

# 9.39: *Sinnerman* by Nina Simone (5:27)

# 9.40: *God’s Gonna Cut You Down* by Johnny Cash (2:50)

**10.0: Videos, Short Films, Movie Clips, Audio Recordings & Photography**

**10.1:** *How could a benevolent god allow evil? Is it really just a matter of free will?* by BBC Radio 4 (2:00)

**10.2:** *Interview with God* by Richard Holdman (3:36)

**10.3:** *Rituals: The 99 Names of God* by yumna (4:19)

**10.4:** *God Is Kidding* with English Subs by DIGITALBOAZ (7:14)

***TED Talks***

**10.5:** *Letting Go of God* by Julia Sweeney (16:20)

**10.6:** *Reclaiming Religion* by Rabbi Sharon Brous (16:19)

**10.7:** *The Gospel of Doubt* by Casey Gerald (18:12)

**10.8:** *Let’s Teach Religion—All Religion—in Schools* by Dan Dennet (24:33)

**10.9:** *On Reading the Koran* by Lesley Hazleton (9:19)

**10.10:** *Atheism 2.0* by Alain de Botton (19:05)

**10.11:** *Militant Atheism* by Richard Dawkins (28:59)

**10.12:** *Is Religion Good or Bad (This is a trick question)* by Kwame Anthony Appiah (14:29)

**10.13:** *My Failed Mission to Find God and What I Found Instead* by Anjali Kumar (15:57)

**10.14:** *12 Truths I Learned from Life and Writing* by Anne Lamott (15:46)

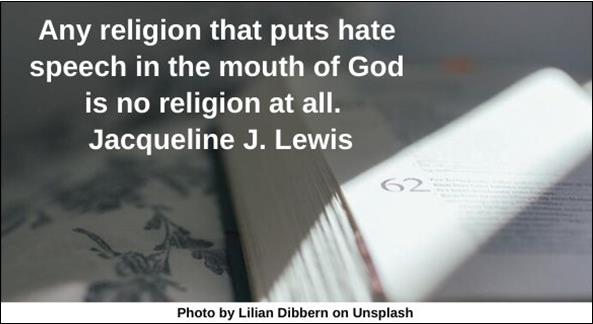
**10.15:** *East vs. West—The Myths That Mystify* by Devdutt Pattanaik (18:11)

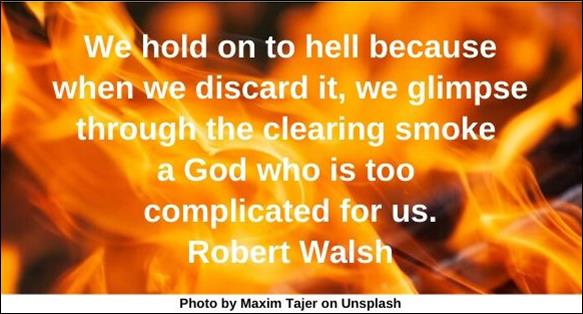
**Appendix: Ways of Being Religious / Definitions**

**Resources**

**1.0: Pins for God / The Divine**













**Resources for Children**

**2.0: Children’s Homilies, Sermons, Time for All Ages & Resources**

**No resources identified.**

**3.0: Wisdom Stories about God / The Divine** (509 words)

**3.1:***God Is…* compiled by Tirrell H. Kimball of the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church in Portland, Maine.

Twice upon a time, the religious education leader of a UU church in Portland, Maine, decided to ask the kids in her program what they thought about God. From their answers, she made two different What Is God? books. Here is some of what they said:

* + - **From Shannon, age 5, with a picture she drew of squiggly lines:** The squiggly lines are the words God told me to say when I closed my eyes to think about her. She also told me to draw a cross. God has lots of words to say.
    - **From Allyson, age 5:** I think that God is up in the clouds. I think that he has a long beard.
    - **From Brandon, age 6:** Maybe God looks like a tree. God would like us to stop polluting the water.
    - **From Kate, age 7:** I think there’s a little light of God in everyone. I think God is all the things around us like the sky, the moon, the grass, the trees and the sun and, of course, you always call that nature.
    - **From Lisa, age 8:** I think God is a spirit and I think God is our home and the sky and the grass and the trees and the ground. God is everything.
    - **From Taylor, age 9:** God is . . . um . . . well . . .I don’t really know. It’s kind of a secret that only God knows. Basically, God is everything. It’s inside us, it’s around us. It’s everything.
    - **From Sam, age 10:** I think the symbol for God is the Yin and the Yang because that symbolizes everything. And I think God is everything.
    - **From Chris, age 11:** It doesn’t mean anything really.
    - **From Selena, age 11:** God is a feeling, an emotion inside of you. Something to believe will get you through danger safely. God is what some call your conscience. God is a spirit inside everyone. The strength of the god is determined on the capability of the person, determined on the faith, luck, and will to believe in themselves and the god. The attitude is also determined on the person, the attitude of the god. Each god of each person is born and dies with the person.
    - **From Emily, age 12:** God is like a small seed of creation.
    - **From Brett, age 12:** God is within us. It is a spirit buried inside of our bodies.
    - **From Graham, age 13:** God is an idea made to solve the unknown. Therefore, think what you want about it.
    - **From Peter, age 13:** God is one big face, not really happy or sad, not male or female, and when you get really close, it is made up of a lot of little tiny faces made of many colors.
    - **From Stefan, age 13:** God is Everything.
    - **From Evan, age 14:** Personally, I don’t believe in god or any gods. I believe that every person has their own belief and should stick to it.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session4/157118.shtml>

**3.2:** *Why and Where God Hides* (309 words)

A speaker in the Bible says to God: “Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.” This is verse 15 from Chapter 45 in the Book of Isaiah. But the Bible is not the only place people talk about God hiding. Stories from different times and cultures tell of the same thing.

These stories give different reasons why God wanted to hide.

Some say that God became tired of being badgered by people with requests for everything.

Some say that God decided being hard to find would help people grow in their search for the holy.

Some say that God just needed a place to live.

The stories also disagree about who helped God decide where to hide. Some say it was angels. Others say it was advisors, like a president might have. Still others say it was animals.

Many different ideas floated around. One was to have God hide on the moon. But God said no, because God could see the future and knew people would someday land on the moon. A second was to have God hide at the bottom of the sea. But God said no, because God knew people would someday visit the bottom of the sea. A third was to have God hide deep in the earth. But God said no, because God knew people would someday be mining the earth.

These things have all come to pass, of course. People have been to the moon and to the bottom of the ocean and deep into the earth, and they have not found God in any of those places.

Where did God hide that was so successful? Here’s where the stories come closer together. They all say in one way or another that God decided to hide inside each of us.

And that is where God remains today.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session13/157486.shtml>

**3.3:** *God in Hiding,*an ancient tale retold by Rev. Beth Chronister (276 words)

A legend says that, at the beginning of time, God, tired of feeling out of the loop, became resolved to hide within creation. Wishing to find just the right hiding place, God sought the wisdom of Sophia.

**God:** “I want to hide myself in my own creation. I need to find a place that is not too easily discovered, for it is in their search for me that my creatures grow in spirit and in understanding.”

**Sophia:** “Why don’t you hide yourself deep in their earth?”

**God:** “No, it won’t be too long before they learn how to mine the earth and discover all the treasures it contains. They will find me too quickly, and they will not have had enough time to do their growing.”

**Sophia:** “Why don’t you hide yourself on their moon?”

**God:** “No, it will take them a little longer, but eventually they will learn to fly through space. They will arrive at the moon and explore its secrets—and they will find me too soon, before they have had enough time to do their growing.”

**Sophia:** “Wow... you’ve set some high expectations, haven’t you?... Well, then, let me think... (waaait for the Epiphany) ... I know! Why don’t you hide yourself within their own hearts? They will never think of looking for you there!”

**God:** “Oh, my Self. That’s it!”

And so, it is that God secretly hides deep within the heart of every one of God’s creatures, until that creature has grown enough in spirit and understanding to risk the great journey into the secret core of its own being. It is there, that the creature discovers it creator, and understands its place in relationship to the Divine.

# Source: Touchstones

# 3.4: *Hide-and-Seek with God* by Mary Ann Moore (704 words)

Once upon a time God said, “I’m bored because I don’t have anything to do. I want to play with my friends.” And because God is God, as soon as the words were spoken, God’s friends were there. When God saw them all gathered, God said, “I’ve been bored because I haven’t had anything to do. Let’s play something.”

“Good idea,” said God’s friends. “What shall we play?”

God thought for a minute and then said, “I know, let’s play hide-and-seek!”

The friends all said, “Yay!” They knew that hide-and-seek with God was always exciting and different because God was the one who hid and God always thought of wonderful places to hide.

God’s friends closed their eyes tight and counted to ten. When they opened their eyes, God wasn’t there anymore. So they all went off to look for God.

One friend decided to look close on the earth and soon came to a meadow. As he was searching, he stopped to admire the tender new sprouts of green grass pushing their way up toward the sun. As he bent over to look more closely at the tender green, he realized there was something special and amazing and wonderful about it. So he jumped up and ran back to home base, calling out, “I found God! God is green and growing. I found God in the grass!”

Another one of God’s friends decided to look for God in the night. She watched the sun go down, and heard the work-a-day noises stop, and saw the lights in the houses go out. As it got darker and the peaceful night wrapped itself around her, she listened very hard, and then she realized there was something special and amazing and wonderful about it. And when it was so still that she could see and hear nothing at all, she suddenly jumped up and ran to home base, calling out, “I found God! God is dark and peaceful. I found God in the night!”

A third friend looked on the earth and felt the mystery of the grass growing toward the sun. He stayed and watched the night come on, and he felt the mystery of the darkness and the stars. He thought to himself, “These mysteries are special and amazing and wonderful.” But when he finally came back to home base, he said, “I found wonderful mysteries but I’m not sure if I want to call them God.”

A fourth friend decided to look for God where people were. He joined a group of people going home from work and went with them into the store where they bought food. He went with them back out on the street as they started for their homes. He was with them when someone came up and said, “Please, I’m very hungry. Could you share a little food with me?” The people readily agreed and as he watched them share, he realized there was something special and amazing and wonderful about those people. He turned around and ran to home base, calling out, “I found God! God is love and sharing. I found God in people who care for others!”

Finally, two more of God’s friends, a boy and a girl, decided to look for God together. After a time, they came to a house and decided to look for God in the house. In the house they saw a room, and they looked for God in the room. In the room they saw a mirror, and they looked for God in the mirror. As they looked into the mirror, they realized there was something special and amazing and wonderful being reflected in it. They turned around and ran to home base, calling out, “We found God! We found God in us!”

At this God appeared again and said, “I had so much fun! Weren’t those good hiding places? Some of you found me, others weren’t sure, and others are still looking. That’s OK because the most important thing is just to play the game. Let’s do it again! I’m sure I can think of some other good hiding places.” And they all called out, “Olly, olly, oxen free, free, free!” And the game started all over again.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/5953.shtml>

**3.5:** *The Wandering Teacher* (252 words)

Once upon a time there was a Teacher who was known far and wide as one who had mastered all the great disciplines of a spiritual seeker. She wandered the country, and whenever people heard she was near, they traveled to seek her wisdom and her guidance.

“Great Teacher,” one would say, “I wish to get closer to God.” “By what path do you travel now?” she would ask. “I study the scriptures, diligently applying myself day and night to unlocking their mysteries,” might come the reply. “Then you should put down your books and walk in the woods—thinking nothing, but listening deeply.”

Another would say, “I do good to every person I meet, doing all that I can to serve their needs.” “Then for a time,” the Teacher would reply, “consider yourself well met and strive to serve your own needs as you have so well served others.”

One day the Teacher noticed someone in the back of the crowd, someone not pushing his way to her as most of the others did. She went to him. “What is it I can do for you?” she asked.

“I do not know,” he relied. “I feel in need of something, but I do not believe in God and have nothing you could call a ‘practice.’” “When do you feel most alive?” the Teacher asked. “When I am playing with my children,” the man said without hesitation. “Then play with your children,” said the Teacher. “And you will find what you seek.”

Source:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/practice/workshop1/wandering-teacher>

**3.6:** *Seven People Cutting Stones* by Roger Walsh (270 words)

… [The young man] he saw a line of people, each with a huge stone in front of them that they were hammering and chiseling.

…He approached a young man at one end of the line and asked, “What are you doing?”

… “I’m killing time until I get off work.”

…[He] turned to …a young woman, and asked, “Excuse me, but what are you doing?”

“I’m earning a living to support my family,” she responded.

…[He] moved on to the third person and asked again, “What are you doing?”

“I’m creating a beautiful statue,” came the reply. Turning to the next person, …[he] repeated his question.

“I’m helping to build a cathedral,” came the answer.

“Ah! …I think I’m beginning to understand.” Approaching the woman who was next in line he asked, “And what are you doing?

“I am helping the people in this town and generations that follow them, by helping to build this cathedral.”

“Wonderful…. And you, sir? He called to the man beside her.

“I am helping to build this cathedral in order to serve all those who use it and to awaken myself in the process. I am seeking my salvation through service to others.”

Finally, …[he] turned to the last stone worker, an old, lively person whose eyes twinkled and whose mouth formed a perpetual smile. “And what are you doing?” he inquired.

“Me?” smiled the elder. “Doing?” The elder roared with laughter. “This ego dissolved into God many years ago. There is no ‘I’ left to ‘do’ anything. God works through this body to help and awaken all people and draw them to Him.”

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=962>

***Creation Stories***

**3.7:** *Maui and Pele Create Hawai’I* (474 words)

The god Maui was the smallest but smartest of his brothers, who often made fun of him because he couldn’t fish very well.

Sometimes Maui would go out on a boat with his brothers, distract them when they had a fish on the line, and steal it from them, claiming it as his own. But soon his brothers caught on, and wouldn’t let Maui fish with them any longer.

Maui’s mother, taking pity on him, told Maui to go and fetch a magical hook, fastened to the heavens. When the hook catches land, it will raise the land from the bottom of the sea floor.

When he got the hook, Maui begged his brothers to take him out just once more. He wanted to prove he was the best fisherman of all.

Maui cast his line into the sea, and soon enough, he hooked it on land. The sea began to move, and great waves rose all around them. Maui commanded his panicked brothers to paddle harder and harder, and not to look back. Maui pulled and pulled, and soon mountaintops began to rise from the ocean. But one of Maui’s brothers was too curious, and he looked back in awe at what Maui had done.

The spell was broken, and the magical line broke, leaving only the mountaintops visible above the ocean.

And that is how the Hawaiian Islands were born. They were only mountains then, until Pele brought her fire to Hawai’i.

Pele was born from the supreme beings, Papa, or Earth Mother, and Wakea, (Wah-Kay-uh) Sky Father. Pele was among the first voyagers to sail to Hawai’i from her homeland Tahiti in a canoe guided by her shark-god brother. Pele saw a high mountain with a cloudy haze hiding its peak and knew she had found her new home. She named the island Hawai’i.

Pele, carrying her magic stick Pa’oa (pay-oh-uh), went up to the mountain where a part of the earth collapsed into the ground. She placed the stick into the ground, and fire began to erupt from the mountain. Pele called this place Kilauea (kill-u-ay-uh). Inside the Kilauea crater was a large pit. She named it Halema’uma’u (halemma-uma-oo). Halema’uma’u would be her new home.

A cliff on nearby Kilauea Mountain is sacred to her eldest brother, Ka-moho-ali’I (ka-moho-alee-he), king of the sharks and the keeper of the gourd that held the water of life. Out of respect for this brother, to this day, Pele never allows clouds of volcanic steam to touch his cliff.

Pele still lives on Hawai’i where she rules as the fire goddess of the volcanoes. The smell of sulfur reminds the natives that she is still there in her home, Halema’uma’u, her fiery lava building a new island to the south, still submerged, named Loahi (lo-uh-hi). Those present whisper in awe:

Ae aia [ay eye-ah] la o Pele, there is Pele.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-1/maui-and-pele>

**3.8:** *Night: a creation story from the Banks Islands in Melanesia* (714 words)

In the beginning, there was light. It never dimmed, this light over everything. It was bright all-light everywhere, and there was no rest from it. The light shone on a huge stone. The stone was Quatgoro, the mother of all things. When she split in half twelve children were born. The first-born was Quat.

Right away he thought about creating things: people, plants, pigs, and stones. He made the first human being from a tree. He carved arms and legs, and then separately he carved a body. Carefully he carved fingers and hands, toes and feet, ears and eyes. When he had all the parts done, he fitted them together. Altogether he made six wooden puppets and the he began to do a sacred dance in front of them. As he danced, the puppets began to move ever so slowly and stiffly, but they moved. Then he began to beat his sacred drum. The drumbeats were like magic. The puppets moved more with each beat until they were doing the dance of life. Quat then fixed them into men and women, three each, and they became three couples, husband and wife.

Quat then made pigs, but they looked like humans. His brothers laughed, so he shortened the pig’s front legs because he didn’t want them to be laughed at. The pigs began to walk on four legs and they have walked that way ever since. In this way Quat made all sorts of things, plants, canoes, and many other things.

One day Quat’s brothers complained to him saying, “It’s too light. Quat, do something. We don’t like the world so bright all of the time. Please make something to stop it.”

Quat searched everything for something that was not light. He could find nothing. Light was everywhere. He wondered how he could make a place without light. He had heard about a place at the far edge of the sky called Qong, which means Night. Quat tied a pig to his canoe and sailed over the sea to the far edge of the sky.

He sailed and sailed until he came to the place where the sky came down and he could touch it. This was where Qong lived.

Night was dark. It had no light anywhere in it. It touched Quat about his eyes leaving him with the blackest eyebrows. Qong also taught Quat how to sleep. When Quat was ready to return, the great darkness, Night, gave him a piece of himself to take back home.

On his journey home Quat stopped at the Torres Islands. He gave the people there his pig and a small bit of his piece of Night. In turn, they gave him birds of all kinds. Now you know why the Torres have pigs and night to this very day.

When Quat arrived home, he brought darkness with him. He also brought the birds who always follow night with their noise of waking. This is how we know that day is coming.

Quat’s brothers were waiting for him. He showed them how to make beds from coco leaves, which he spread on the floor. He also showed them how to lay down and rest so that they would be ready for sleep. Then Quat opened his hand and released the piece of Night. It began to cover the sky. Quat told his brothers, “This is Night. Close your eyes and lie still.” Soon his brothers felt weightless and dreamlike. “What is happening to us,” they asked? “Don’t worry,” said Quat. “You are just falling asleep.”

The birds knew just how long Night should be. After several hours of quiet they began to chirp and whistle and squawk. Quat woke up and used a sharp, red stone to cut a hole in Night. The light began to shine through. The brothers woke up and began their chores. This is the way it has been for us ever since. Night comes. We sleep. Birds cry. We wake. Day comes. We work. All because of Quat. Day in, day out.

In praising the sun for its life-giving power, let us not neglect night for the blessing of darkness, for the cooling respite from the sun’s heat, for the cycle of sleep that renews and for the work of dreaming.

Source: Touchstones

**Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists**

**3.9:** Excerpt from Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of Dr. George de Benneville (1,026 words)

Excerpted from Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of Dr. George de Benneville, translated by Rev. Elhanan Winchester (Germantown, PA: Converse Cleaves, Publisher, 1890), with material to explain the context for each.

George de Benneville was raised by his godmother, Queen Anne of England. Both of his parents, who were part of the French aristocracy, had fled to the British Royal Court of London because they were Protestants threatened by the ruling French Catholic crown.

George was sent to sea at age 12 to learn navigation. He was a midshipman in a war vessel attached to a small fleet bound for the Barbary Coast on a diplomatic mission. At this point in his life, he was “wildly believing,” as he put it, that he “belonged to a different class from mankind in general [and was] self-exalted.” His ship arrived at Algiers. De Benneville explains what happened next:

[A]s I walked upon deck, I saw some Moors who brought refreshments to sell; one of them fell and injured one of his legs; two of his companions having laid him on deck, kissed the wound and shed tears upon it; then turning towards the rising of the sun, they cried in such a manner that I was moved with much anger, and ordered my servant to bring them before me. Upon demanding the reason of their outcry, they, perceiving that I was angry, implored my pardon, and told me the cause was owing to one of their brothers having hurt his leg by a fall, and that they kissed the wound in order to sympathize with him, and likewise shed tears upon it, and as tears were saltish, they were a good remedy for the hurt; and the reason for their turning towards the rising sun was to invoke him who created the sun to have compassion upon their poor brother and be pleased to heal him. Upon that I was so convinced and moved within that I thought my heart would break, and that my life was about to leave me; my eyes were filled with tears, and I felt such an internal condemnation that I was forced to cry out and say, “Are these men Heathens? No; I confess before God they are Christians, and I myself am a Heathen!” Behold the first conviction that the grace of our Sovereign Good [God] employed: he was pleased to convince a white person by blacks, one who carried the name of a Christian, by a Pagan, and who was obliged to confess himself a Heathen. Still that was soon overcome and forgotten.

Upon his return to England, de Benneville went to a dance and so overheated himself he fell into a faint and had a vision in which he again was unexpectedly forced to pay attention to his own emotions of vanity, pride, self-exaltation and arrogance. He saw himself burning in Hell. Returning to consciousness, he cried out: “I am damned.”

For 15 months he remained in a state of irreconcilable self-loathing and depression, rejecting assurances by court ministers that he, of his rank and station, had done nothing wrong, unmoved by their counsel. The court ministers eventually deemed de Benneville predestined to be damned because they could not console him.

De Benneville had come face to face with his sinful arrogance and hardheartedness toward the wellbeing of others. He could no longer avoid the truth of his heart: He was a wretched being utterly undeserving of forgiveness or love. De Benneville knew his sins and acknowledged to himself that he indeed had too many of them to be forgiven. He awaited his death for he had discovered within himself, as he put it: ...The root of all my sins and iniquities to be within my heart [and] that discovery brought me into an extreme agony, and despair took possession of my soul, which was now pressed on all sides with misery, caused especially by great unbelief and hardness of heart. I could discover no remedy for my troubles.... I desired to die, but death fled from me.

He knew that God, his judge, damned him. This awareness brought de Benneville’s arrogance to its knees. He had discovered the place of emotional humility within himself: a contrite heart. Now he could abandon himself to the mercy of God.

At this moment, his religious transformation began: the moment of utter contrition linked to a deep and abiding sense of humility. Contrite rather than arrogant, and humbled rather than depressed, de Benneville discovered he was not standing alone before the judgment seat of God. In de Benneville’s words: ... a most majestic appearance [stood before him], whose beauty, brightness, and grandeur can never be described: he looked upon me with grace and mercy, and with a penetrating look of love, the fire of which so embraced my soul that I loved him in return. He persuaded me in my heart that he was my Saviour, Mediator, and Reconciliator, and while I thought thereon, he began to intercede for me in the following manner, saying “... I have suffered all kinds of ignominy for him. I have suffered the shameful death of the cross for him... I have descended into the abyss of Hell for him, that I might deliver him... O my Heavenly Father, pardon this poor sinner, and cause thy mercy to descend upon him.” The Judge or Justice had nothing more to say. The sentence disappeared. Then I heard his eternal, universal voice, which penetrated me with divine power, saying, “Take courage, my son, thy sins and iniquities was removed, all the stings and reproaches ceased, a living faith came in their stead, and the tears of sorrow were all wiped from my eyes. ... O my dear soul! sink thyself into nothingness and the deepest humiliation, and adore in spirit and in truth the ocean of love, and the great wonders of the wisdom and power of thy God, who hath employed all these boundless, incomprehensible miracles to restore and to save thee, and not thee only, but all the human species, through Jesus Christ our Lord... He loved me before I was born. Oh, what grace! He loved me in my fallen estate when I was wholly lost. Oh, what mercy! He even loved me when I was altogether unworthy, and freely too. Oh, what love... Hallelujah! Amen.”

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop1/282448.shtml>

**3.10:** *Hosea Ballou’s Conversion* (577 words)

In 1789, Hosea Ballou attended the Baptist revival held in his hometown of Richmond, New Hampshire. Moved by the preaching during this event, which was touted as “The Great Reformation,” Ballou, age 19, stepped forward to be baptized. Like his friends and the hundred or so others around him who also stepped forward to be saved, Ballou had been gripped by fear. But unlike the others professing their new, aching need for God’s forgiveness and grace, Ballou was not fearful enough. He did not feel what he was supposed to feel: gut-wrenching fear. He believed the dominant Calvinist theology of his era which claimed God separated the elect from the damned before they were born and that except for these chosen few, all were doomed to eternal damnation, fire and brimstone for their sins. Yet, he did not feel clenched in the grip of an angry, vengeful, wrath-filled God described by the two preachers who led the revival. Ballou was upset because he wasn’t upset enough. People were supposed to be terrified of this God and fearful that they might not be one of His chosen people.

Ballou described his predicament years later, in a letter to a friend: “I was much troubled in my mind because I thought I did not stand in such fear of the divine wrath as I ought to do, or as others had done before they found acceptance with God.” Worse yet, the doctrines he was now supposed to believe about God and Christ rung hollow.

To figure out what was going on, Ballou turned to the Bible to make sense of the doctrines of his newly professed faith. His mind became troubled anew. It seemed to him that nothing in the Bible supported belief in the Baptist doctrines he was supposed to espouse: belief in eternal damnation for all human beings except a preordained “elect” few; belief in the sacrifice of Christ to reconcile an aggrieved God to sinful man; belief that Christ as the Son of God was also, at the same time, his own Father. Ballou’s keenly rational mind rejected such notions as illogical and thus patently absurd. The Bible seemed to affirm Universalism—universal salvation for all—and Unitarianism—the unity of the Godhead rather than in a Triune God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

With these discoveries, Ballou felt happy. Happiness abounded in his heart. And he now knew why he had not felt fearful enough: There was nothing to fear. The God of wrath preached by angry ministers was a human-made God, a false God. By removing the false teachings and the errant theology, Ballou felt the God of love. Ballou felt loved and he was happy. But when Ballou tried to explain to local ministers what he felt and what he had discovered, they screamed at him about his burgeoning Universalist faith, rather than reason with him over the interpretation of biblical texts. So, Ballou’s Universalism and Unitarianism took firmer hold of his heart and his mind and his new, liberal faith now flowed forth from happiness. He believed that all human beings would be blessed in their afterlife. God condemns no one to eternal punishment and damnation. Universal salvation, Ballou discovered, is a grace-filled gift of an eternally loving God for humanity.

Ballou finally believed that our personal desires motivate our actions and all of them (benevolence, greed, self-sacrifice, love, etc.) boil down to one: the personal desire to feel internally happy.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop3/282532.shtml>

**3.11:** *Augusta Jane Chapin’s Call to Ministry* by Polly Peterson (799 words)

Back in 1836, when Augusta Jane Chapin was born, women rarely spoke in public. Most Americans considered it highly improper, especially if men were present. The idea of a woman minister was simply unthinkable to conventional minds of the time. Yet, by the age of seventeen, Augusta Chapin knew that she would preach—and ten years later she became one of America’s first ordained women ministers.

Augusta Chapin began life as a precocious child, eager to learn. Her father was proud of her abilities and allowed her to go to school from the time she was three years old. By age fourteen, she was a schoolteacher herself. Very few colleges accepted women at that time, but Augusta’s hopes for a college education came true at the age of sixteen. She gained admittance to Olivet College, which was affiliated with the Congregational church.

Augusta had learned bible verses in Sunday school while growing up in Michigan, but she first began learning about religious doctrine in college. The Calvinist notion of eternal punishment troubled her greatly. As she studied and thought, she concluded that a loving God would never choose a few individuals to save, while condemning the rest for eternity. She became convinced that the ideas of Universalism were right and true. That realization set the course of her unusual life’s journey. “I have no recollection of ever considering the question of whether I would preach or not,” she told a biographer thirty years later. “I never deliberately chose the profession of ministry; from the moment I believed in Universalism, it was a matter of course that I was to preach it. I never questioned as to how I came by this purpose, nor did it ever seem in the least strange that I should preach, nor had I any real conception of how my course must appear to my friends and the world until I had been more than ten years in the active work.”

Since there was no clear path for a woman who wanted to preach, Augusta Chapin had to find her own way. After taking courses at Olivet College and at Michigan Female College, she became a school principal and then a teacher of Greek, Latin, French, German, higher mathematics, oil painting, and drawing. Meanwhile, she prepared herself for her true calling—the ministry. In 1859, Chapin preached her first sermon at Portland, Michigan. In December of 1863, after she had been preaching for more than three years, she was ordained to the Universalist ministry. At the time, there were only a handful of women in the ministry, and, of those few, three were Universalists: Lydia Jenkins, Olympia Brown, and Augusta Jane Chapin.

Chapin’s work as a Universalist minister took her to many different towns and cities throughout the United States. She actively promoted the cause of women’s rights. She was a founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Women, and she spoke at the first Women’s Congress held in New York City in 1873. Her speech was an eloquent defense of women as ministers. Some critics dismissed woman preachers as an experiment—and one that was doomed to fail. In response, Chapin said: “My own experience, extending through fifteen years of uninterrupted pulpit and parish work; years of work in the rural villages and neighborhoods of the West; years of work as a settled pastor in a large and growing parish; personal acquaintance with hundreds of parishes east and west in a dozen different States of the Union; all this, together with years of study in college as a direct preparation for the work, has not led me to feel that it is at all an experiment. When I see as many of the wise, powerful and good, and as many of the poor and needy crowding to hear the glad tidings from the lips of my sister as from those of my brother; when I see as many converts bow at the one altar as at the other; when I see churches reared, debts paid, and all good works going on and prospering through the blessing of God, in her hands as in his, and this through a succession of years in the same parish, it does not seem an experiment, nor do the people blessed by such ministry so regard it.”

During her career of more than forty years, Augusta Jane Chapin never regretted responding to the call. She never stopped learning, teaching, and preaching. Her unwavering confidence helped lead the way for dozens of other women who heard the call to become ministers and answered it. Augusta Chapin was living proof that a woman in the role of minister could be as capable as any man. Her successful career shone as a beacon to light the way for others.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/grace/session7/chapins>

**3.12:** *Reason, Science, and the Question of God* (944 words)

Sources used: Encognitive.com on YouTube. “Linus Pauling: Nature of the Universe.” Marshall Klarfeld. “Linus Pauling speaks.” on YouTube. Charles Hartshorne. Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1964. Unitarian Universalist Historical Society. “Charles Hartshorne.” Unitarian Universalist Historical Society. “Linus Pauling.” Online.

The following script has three characters—the moderator (a workshop leader), Linus Pauling and Charles Hartshorne (participant volunteers). Imagine yourself in the 1970s, being filmed for a televised forum on “Reason, Science, and the Question of God.” Get into character as much as you can. The more dramatic, the better!

MODERATOR: Good morning and welcome to the forum entitled “Reason, Science, and the Question of God.” Our distinguished panelists are Linus Pauling, the Nobel Prize-winning chemist and peace activist, and Charles Hartshorne [pronounced harts-horne], a philosopher and theologian. Our forum today will explore the lives, work, and activism of Pauling and Hartshorne and the ways in which science and reason inform their religious and theological perspectives. Linus and Charles, thank you for being here. The first question is, “What is your religious background and how does it inform your current work?” Linus, we’ll begin with you.

PAULING: Thank you for having me here today. I come from a German Lutheran background, though my parents were never very active church people so I didn’t have a strong affiliation. Rather than becoming a machinist as my parents wanted me to, I was intent on becoming a research chemist, so that is exactly what I did. I have been doing research in chemistry and molecular biology and writing books about my work for decades. I also taught at Caltech for more than 30 years. My more recent work, however, is antiwar activism. I have found strong support among the Unitarians in Los Angeles. In fact, in 1954 I addressed a crowd of over 1,000 people at the Los Angeles Unitarian Church about the dangers of nuclear bombs. My wife Ava Helen and I eventually joined the Los Angeles Unitarian Church “because it accepts as members people who believe in trying to make the world a better place.”

MODERATOR: Charles?

HARTSHORNE: It is a pleasure to be here today. Thank you for inviting me. I grew up with liberal Christianity, which taught me that Scripture is inspired but not flawless, that evolution and belief in God do not contradict each other, and that God’s love is more important than God’s power. My father refused to believe that God had control over every detail of the universe. These beliefs all inform my work in the area of process philosophy/theology today. I am suspicious of anyone who gives authority to any one book, church, or person. I believe that freedom and reason must be the tools of religious people. While I study the nature of God, I’m not very active in church these days. My daughter attends the Unitarian church in Chicago, but I have better things to do. At my wife’s urging, I have attended Unitarian churches, and have become quite fond of the minister in Austin, Texas. Unitarian churches are the only ones I will support financially.

MODERATOR: What role does science play in your religious perspective? Charles, it’s your turn to begin.

HARTSHORNE: Reason and logic, which are both scientific tools, are the foundation of my philosophy of the existence of God, which I believe is both sensitive to values and aligned with the sciences. I believe that the relationship of God to the cosmos is like the relation of a person to the cells of their body—”the world is God’s body.”

MODERATOR: Linus?

PAULING: I like to understand the world. I like to learn about new ideas. I like to think about problems, look at them in different ways, and finally get an answer to them. Chemistry is an experimental science. I deal with the world as I perceive it, and approach both science and religion from an experimental perspective.

MODERATOR: Is there an ethical component to your work? Linus, we’ll begin with you.

PAULING: During the Second World War, I used my scientific expertise for military research and development, but following the war, I became increasingly concerned about the further development and possible use of atomic weapons. My wife is a pacifist and has influenced me in that direction. I began to realize the great dangers confronting us — that the atomic bomb could end the world as we know it. Therefore, I began traveling around giving speeches, circulating petitions, and protesting (along with Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell) the testing of nuclear weapons. I was honored in 1962 to receive a second Nobel Prize — the first one was for chemistry, and this one was for peace. My basic philosophy is oriented to the diminution of suffering in the world. My basic ethical principle... [is] that decisions be made that will increase happiness.

MODERATOR: Charles?

HARTSHORNE: To me, ethical means being motivated by concern for the interests of others. I believe that love is a measure of ethics because love is “action from social awareness.” Therefore, God is absolutely ethical because God is perfectly loving, and we humans must try to be nearly as ethical and loving.

MODERATOR: Now, the last question of the forum: Do you believe in God? Charles?

HARTSHORNE: Absolutely. I believe in a God that is a creative and moving power open to human influence. I come from the perspective of panentheism — God is not identical with the world, but God is also not completely separate from the world. God transcends the earth, but the world is also contained within God. From a scientific perspective, this makes sense to me.

MODERATOR: Linus?

PAULING: No, I do not. I have no interest in the mystical aspects of religion. My discipline is to explain everything back to the beginning of the universe. If you ask me what there was just before the Big Bang, I cannot explain that to you. If you wish to believe in a God as the creator, please do, as we cannot explain what there was just a millisecond before the Big Bang.

MODERATOR: Linus and Charles, thank you for joining us today for this forum on “Reason, Science, and the Question of God.” We appreciate your taking the time to share with us your reasoned perspectives and work on these critical issues for our time.

Source:<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop7/reason%2C-science-question-of-god>

**3.13:** *Forrest Church’s Redemption Experiences* by Rev. Dr. Forrest Church (1,482 words)

Stories and reflections from, Bringing God Home: A Traveler’s Guide (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002). Used with permission.

**Church’s Childhood Death Fantasy**

Etched in my soul, and by far the most haunting memory of my childhood, is a fantasy of death. I date it to sometime after my family moved to Washington, D.C., when I was eight years old. I can’t remember how often I succumbed to this fantasy, but I do recall what prompted it (a brutal argument with my mother), the time of day when these battles took place (right before bed), and the thing that triggered them (always a lie). When my mother caught me lying, not content to leave bad enough alone, I would fabricate more lies to cover up the first one. What finally piqued her anger into fury, whether my transparent mendacity or my panic-driven tears, I’m not certain. Given the premium placed on cheerfulness in our household, probably the latter. In either case, possessed by my favored demon (naked fear), I spun out of control, my mother’s anger intensifying until it reached a fevered pitch. Invariably, the battle ended with me in total humiliation and banished to my room.

More vivid in my memory than the struggle itself is its aftermath. After sobbing uncontrollably for a few minutes, I would launch my mind into a sea of self-pity. Into this wine-red sea sailed my fantasy of death.

Running away from home, I crawl out of my bedroom window into the snowy night. Wearing only my pajamas, I wander in the bitter cold through the woods between our house and the elementary school. I fall into a snowdrift. Never have I felt so alone. And then I die. The snow stops and morning dawns. A schoolmate finds me lifeless in the snow, bursts into tears, and rushes off to tell my parents. “Come quickly. Forrest is dead.” My parents hadn’t missed me. They didn’t even notice I had run away. Hastening to my side and falling to their knees to embrace my body, they beg me to awaken. My father becomes distant. My mother moans in disbelief. Through tears of self-recrimination and overcome by grief, she pities me with all her heart.

At this moment in my imagined melodrama, the floodgate opens once again, my self-pity magnified by the specter of me dead, my mother’s lamentations almost too poignant to bear. But not quite, for with this I rewind my fantasy and play it back again, embellishing it yet further with loving detail: ripped pajamas, my beloved sock monkey frozen to my breast, my mother’s raven hair blowing in the wind, the dark sun, the snow on my forehead.

And then, interrupting my fantasy, the bedroom door opened. A crack of light pierced the darkness, and in slipped my mother. Sitting down on the bed, she leaned over and hugged me, saying she was sorry, confessing how very much she loved me. We cried together. She cradled me in her arms, my tears subsiding. An inexpressible calm settled over me. I shut my eyes. My mother rocked me gently until I drifted off to sleep. When I awakened in the morning, my fantasy of death was but a distant dream.

**Church’s Reflections on his Death Fantasy**

My waking nightmare and its aftermath... reflect the basic elements of a familiar tale of sin and redemption. First, I abandon love in a search for love, flee home to find the comforts of home, destroy myself in order to be saved. Then, through no act of my own, I receive love, find home, and experience salvation. My mother knew nothing of my fantasy. It was not by willfulness or self-pity that I found fulfillment. It entered my room uncoerced and undeserved, like grace. All I contributed to my own redemption was to long for it and to be willing to receive it when it came.

In this childhood drama my mother assumes the role of a traditional Judeo-Christian God. She punishes me for my wrongdoing and then forgives me, each as an act of love....

... What impels us to run away in the first place? In the search for an answer, consider the broader question: Why would we run away from anything we seek: success, companionship, community, health, freedom, responsibility, even love? What would drive us to subvert our most cherished aspirations?

**Church’s Reflections on his Former Drinking Problem**

“... when fear spurs our flight, we are running away not from another but from ourselves. Having many times been prompted to flight by inner demons—muting life or changing channels and turning up its volume—I know this pattern well. Turning to the comforts of the bottle was for me itself (at least in part) a fear-driven attempt to escape pain, especially that of worry or regret. Only after years of mistakenly self-serving resistance did I finally learn that suppressing pain strengthens its grip....

I have pondered why I drank so much and for so many years. To any but the most attentive observer, it would not appear to have been from a lack of healthy self-esteem, but looking back I wonder. I certainly used alcohol to subdue unwelcome feelings. I was afraid of looking too deeply within myself, for fear of what I might find there.

More prideful expressions of my egoism were more obvious in my drinking. I dictated my own set of rules and then slavishly followed them. Nonetheless, having counseled many addicts and alcoholics over the years, I didn’t recognize myself in their glass. My work won me the respect of others, and my spirit—whether elevated artificially or not—contributed to the general bonhomie of most of the company I kept. For the most part, I lived life in the manner I wished and did what I chose to do.

To ease my conscience, I also prided myself on not being a moral perfectionist. I wrote books with titles such as The Devil and Dr. Church and The Seven Deadly Virtues. I edited a twelve-step book while drinking. I have discovered it to be useful to me now that I have stopped. At the time, however, I accepted drinking as a lubricant to creativity. If Faulkner, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald could write drunk, who was I to question such a muse? It even appeared to work for me. I found that Scotch muted self-criticism and thus facilitated my productivity. I would never be guilty of committing a bestseller, but that was fine also. Until my awakening began to complicate matters (when the emptiness of my life became unendurable), I was enjoying a good time and hardly raising a sweat as I did so. My appetites for both indolence and gluttony were well served and, far from being a bad person, I was merely a self-indulgent one. I believed that the world, on balance, was a better place during those years of my residence within, and in retrospect I think it probably was.

As things turned out, for me pride didn’t lead to a fall; it simply took slow possession of my soul. Fortunately, when I awoke one day to discover that God was nowhere in my life, I knew enough to recognize that alcohol (thought symptomatic of more general self-absorption) was part of the reason. I wasn’t humiliated into humility as so many others have been, merely lost in the desert of self. I felt an emptiness I could no longer medicate against and to which I had to either respond or succumb.

Love gradually turned me from the bottle, which had become a kind of mistress. I discovered that I could fulfill my own hopes only by answering the needs of those I love. Old habits are hard to break, but over time love’s responsibilities tempered and deepened this awakening. At first, I simply cut my drinking back, and my pilgrimage progressed, albeit slowly. Were it not for my wife, Carolyn, I doubt that I would have attempted to continue it sober, for to do so entailed the loss of fond and familiar comforts. Notwithstanding her concerns, comforted triumphed over love for years. I walked toward God with a half-full bottle in my suitcase. I tried to cut a bargain between my appetites and my responsibilities. As most drunks will tell you, this didn’t work. So, I swallowed my last bit of pride and, at long last, found my way out of the thickets of addiction.

In retrospect, I am grateful today not only for my wife but, in a strange way, for my addiction also. It established the parameters of a God-shaped hole that I could fill only with God. Each of us has his or her personal version of this hole, and we attempt to fill it in our own private ways. Yet no God substitute can fill the God-shaped hole. For this reason alone—since little contentments disguise our spiritual emptiness by taking the edge off our hunger for spiritual renewal—we should welcome discontent when it visits.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop8/forrest-church>

**3.14:** *Doctrinal Freedom* (392 words)

There was an extraordinary range of personal beliefs among the participants in my 2003 small group workshop in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. They were the delegates, staff and visitors attending the annual meeting of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. Some were self-defined Christians. Others were Humanists. Some did not define themselves as religious at all. And one participant, a self-identified Unitarian, believed that Jesus is not only God, but also believed that he died to save a sinful humanity, was resurrected on the third day and now is seated at the right hand of God. Clearly, a common set of religious ideas and beliefs was not the unifying factor for this gathered community. Rather, our Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist doctrinal freedom was writ large. Each participant drew on different theological and/or scientific sources to explain their own personal experience of a change of heart that occurred within this small group workshop community setting of care and compassion that we created together.

Reflecting on the workshop experience, one woman said she had felt God in the room. Another said he saw a spirit moving around the room. Several persons said they had discovered something about their religion, a feeling of repose they did not know existed until that moment and they felt trust and love of the persons around them with a new depth not known before. One man said he always hoped for a moment at these international conferences when something miraculous happens and this workshop, for him, was that moment. Many persons described a heightened sense of awareness accompanied by a deep and abiding sense of peace, relaxation, and the cessation of inner turmoil. All were amazed by the variety and diversity of ideas participants used to express what the small group experiences they had created together meant to them individually.

The participants could freely draw on different theological and scientific resources to interpret and express the change of heart they individually experienced in this community setting of care and compassion—because all are members of a doctrinally free, liberal religious tradition.

This doctrinal freedom is the intellectual signature of our liberal faith tradition. I call this **the** zone of intellectual doctrinal freedom, the third major element of personal experience for us because it sanctions our theological diversity as members of the same religious community.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop10/282843.shtml>

***World Religions***

**3.15:** *St. Francis and the Wolf* by John Feister (571words)

This telling of “St. Francis and the Wolf” was written by John Feister, editor of AmericanCatholic.org, based on the story recorded by Thomas of Celano during the 13th century.

Perhaps the most famous story of St. Francis is when he tamed the wolf that was terrorizing the people of Gubbio. While Francis was staying in that town, he learned of a wolf so ravenous that it was not only killing and eating animals, but people, too. The people took up arms and went after it, but those who encountered the wolf perished at its sharp teeth. Villagers became afraid to leave the city walls.

Francis had pity on the people and decided to go out and meet the wolf. He was desperately warned by the people, but he insisted that God would take care of him. A brave friar and several peasants accompanied Francis outside the city gate. But soon the peasants lost heart and said they would go no farther.

Francis and his companion began to walk on. Suddenly the wolf, jaws agape, charged out of the woods at the couple. Francis made the Sign of the Cross toward it. The power of God caused the wolf to slow down and to close its mouth.

Then Francis called out to the creature: “Come to me, Brother Wolf. In the name of Christ, I order you not to hurt anyone.” At that moment the wolf lowered its head and lay down at St. Francis’ feet, meek as a lamb.

St. Francis explained to the wolf that he had been terrorizing the people, killing not only animals, but humans who are made in the image of God. “Brother Wolf,” said Francis, “I want to make peace between you and the people of Gubbio. They will harm you no more and you must no longer harm them. All past crimes are to be forgiven.”

The wolf showed its assent by moving its body and nodding its head. Then to the absolute surprise of the gathering crowd, Francis asked the wolf to make a pledge. As St. Francis extended his hand to receive the pledge, so the wolf extended its front paw and placed it into the saint’s hand. Then Francis commanded the wolf to follow him into town to make a peace pact with the townspeople. The wolf meekly followed St. Francis.

By the time they got to the town square, everyone was there to witness the miracle. With the wolf at his side, Francis gave the town a sermon on the wondrous and fearful love of God, calling them to repent from all their sins. Then he offered the townspeople peace, on behalf of the wolf. The townspeople promised in a loud voice to feed the wolf. Then Francis asked the wolf if he would live in peace under those terms. He bowed his head and twisted his body in a way that convinced everyone he accepted the pact. Then once again the wolf placed its paw in Francis’ hand as a sign of the pact.

From that day on the people kept the pact they had made. The wolf lived for two years among the townspeople, going from door to door for food. It hurt no one and no one hurt it. Even the dogs did not bark at it. When the wolf finally died of old age, the people of Gubbio were sad. The wolf’s peaceful ways had been a living reminder to them of the wonders, patience, virtues and holiness of St. Francis. It had been a living symbol of the power and providence of the living God.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session9/118424.shtml>

**3.16:** *The Gates of the Forest* by Elie Wiesel (238 words)

When the great Rabbi Israel Ba’al Shem-Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews, it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light the fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted.

Years later when a disciple of the Ba’al Shem-Tov, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say: “Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer,” and again the miracle would be accomplished.

Still later, another rabbi, Rabbi Moshe-leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say, “I do not know how to light the fire. I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient.” It was sufficient and the miracle was accomplished.

The years passed. And it fell to Rabbi Israel of Ryzhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: “I am unable to light the fire, and I do not know the prayer, and I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is tell the story, and this must be sufficient.” And it was sufficient.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/life/workshop2/159144.shtml>

**3.17:** *The Picture on The Kitchen Wall* by Rev. Sophia Lyon Fahs (1,304 words)

A story from China. Sophia Lyon Fahs, *From Long Ago and Many Lands*

Long, long ago in the land of China there lived a very old grandfather, named Chang Kung, who had a very large family. First, there were Chang Kung’s own sons. When his sons grew up, they all married and their wives came to live in Chang Kung’s house. Then grandchildren were born. When these grandsons grew up, they also married and their wives were added to Chang Kung’s family. Then came the great-grandchildren. So, Chang Kung’s family grew and grew until there were several hundred people in it—all living together. There were old people and young people, middle-sized people and children. Always there were a number of babies.

Besides all this, Chang Kung’s family was very fond of pet animals, especially dogs. It is said that at one time one hundred pet dogs belonged to the household.

As Chang Kung’s family grew larger and larger, his house had to grow bigger and bigger too, until it became a collection of houses standing side by side around a large open courtyard. A high stone wall stood like a fence around all the houses, and that made all the houses together seem like one big home.

The larger his family grew; the happier old Chang Kung became. He liked to eat at one of the big long tables with his big and little children beside him. He enjoyed sitting in the sunny courtyard where he could watch his great-grandchildren play.

But Chang Kung’s family is not remembered after these many years simply because it was such a large family. Many people of China have large families. Chang Kung is still remembered because, it is said, the members of his family never quarreled. At least so the story goes. The children never quarreled in their play. The old people never quarreled with each other and never scolded the children. Nobody—big or little—ever said a cross word. Nobody ever did a mean thing. Some said jokingly that even the dogs did not quarrel or bite. When they were brought their bones, they would not even bark, but all would wag their tails and wait their turns.

Stories about this remarkable household spread far and wide over the country just as the breezes blow far and wide in the spring. Finally, news of Chang Kung’s happy family reached the ears of the Emperor.

Now it so happened that the Emperor was about to make a journey to the Western Hills, to a place not far from the home of Chang Kung. So, he decided to visit this wonderful household on his way back, and to see for himself whether or not the rumors he had heard were true.

What a sight it was the day the Emperor arrived outside the village gate. First in the royal procession came the very tall guards dressed in blue and red, carrying long bows and arrows in their hands.

Then came the mandarins, those important men in the Emperor’s court. Their long silk gowns were beautifully embroidered with figures of colored birds. Blue and green peacock feathers waved from their round hats. Other attendants followed, playing flutes and harps as the procession marched down the street.

At last came the Emperor himself in his richly adorned sedan chair, carried on the shoulders of four men in red. When the Emperor entered the gate of Chang Kung’s home, the old man himself was there, to bow many times and to greet his Emperor with very polite words.

“Very excellent and very aged Sir,” said the Emperor, “it is said that inside your walls no cross words are ever spoken. Can this be true?”

“Lord of ten thousand years,” said Chang Kung, “you do my poor house far too much honor. It is true that my family does not quarrel, but it would please us greatly if you would consent to walk about our humble courts and judge for yourself.”

So, the Emperor made his way from one house to another and from one room to another. He talked with everyone he met. In the great Hall of Politeness, he was served delicious food and drink. As he sipped his tea from a dainty cup, he said to Chang Kung: “You must have a golden secret in order to keep so many people living together in such order and peace. I, too, should like to know your secret.”

Then old Chang Kung called his servants to bring a tablet of smooth bamboo. (In those long-ago days there was no paper. All writing was done on wood or on stone.)

Chang Kung asked also for his brush and ink, and the ink stone with its little well of water. He took the brush in his hand and, dipping it into the water and then on the ink, he wrote one word on the tablet. He wrote the word a second time and a third time. He wrote the word over and over until he had written it one hundred times. Then with a low bow, he placed the tablet in the hands of the Emperor.

“You have written many words,” said the Emperor, “but at the same time you have written only one word.”

“Ai, ai,” said Chang Kung, “but that one word is the golden secret, 0 Son of Heaven. It is KINDNESS over and over without any ending.” Chang Kung nodded his gray head as he spoke.

The Emperor was so pleased with the golden secret that he, too, called for a bamboo tablet. Taking the brush that Chang Kung had used, the Emperor wrote these words on his tablet: “Let all the families of China learn the golden secret of Chang Kung and his family.”

When the Emperor had finished writing, he said: “Let this tablet be fastened to the outside of the gate where everyone passing may read it.”

Not many years after the Emperor’s visit Chang Kung died, but the story of his happy household has never been forgotten. People asked the Emperor to have pictures of the old man painted and sold so that families might hang his picture on the wall above their kitchen stoves to remind them to keep the golden secret that Chang Kung and his family had learned.

That is why, after these many, many years, in thousands of homes in China, at the New Year season, a fresh bright picture of Chang Kung is pasted on the wall behind the kitchen stove. Many Chinese will tell you it is a picture of a god, but you should know that Chang Kung was once just a very kind and good man who helped the members of his family to learn to live happily together without quarreling. Since so many people think that God is perhaps much like the very best person that can be imagined, such a good person as Chang Kung seems to them to be like God himself.

To look at the picture of Chang Kung over the kitchen stove every morning helps to remind many thousands of people in China to speak kindly to one another. They feel as if Chang Kung were watching them and listening as they go about their work. They can sometimes imagine they hear him speak that golden word—KINDNESS.

Once a year on the night before New Year’s, the picture of Chang Kung is taken down and burned. As the flames and smoke go upward, the people think: “Chang Kung is flying back to heaven to tell the great God of all the people just how well everyone has behaved during the past year.”

Three days later, they will paste new pictures of Chang Kung on the walls over their kitchen stoves and they will say: “He has now come back again to the earth to keep watch over us for another year.”

(Chang Kung is also known as the Kitchen God. This story comes out of the Confucian tradition.)

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session8/the-picture>

**3.18:** *The Wise Fool* (226 words)

Once the great Sufi holy man and wise fool Nasreddin Hodja was walking down the street when a group of women came running up to him. Obviously distressed, they cried out to him, “Help us, Hodja! Help us.”

“What can be done I will try to do,” the Hodja replied. “What seems to be the trouble?”

“Our husbands,” the women cried. “They’ve all decided that they must go out into the desert in order to dedicate themselves to finding Allah. Our children and we have been abandoned.”

“This should not be,” the Hodja declared, and he set out after the pilgrims as fast as his donkey could carry him. As he approached the band of men, he began to shout, “Help me! Help me, my brothers.”

“What seems to be the trouble, Hodja?” the men called back.

“My donkey,” he said. “I’ve lost my donkey and can’t find him anywhere. Oh, help me search. I must find him!”

“But he’s right there,” the men replied, laughing. “Can’t you see that you’re sitting right on top of him? You don’t have to go anywhere to look for him.”

“And why do you,” the Hodja said, pulling his donkey to a stop, “feel that you must go anywhere to look for Allah? Go back to your wives; go back to your lives.” And that’s just what they did.

Source:<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/practice/workshop8/60540.shtml>

**3.19:** *Muhammad of Makkah* (532 words)

This is a story about a city. The name of the city is Makkah al-Mukarramah, but sometimes it is called Makkah or Mecca. This city is in Saudi Arabia. It is a city thousands of years old.

This is also the story of a man. His name was Muhammad. Shortly before Muhammad was born in the city of Makkah, his father died. Before Muhammad was six years old, his mother died. Then Muhammad lived with his grandfather for two years until his grandfather also died. After that, he lived with his uncle. While Muhammad was still young, his uncle died, too, but other members of Muhammad’s tribe took care of him until he became an adult, got a job, married, and started a family.

Muhammad’s tribe was one of the largest in Makkah. Makkah was Muhammad’s family home, but it was also his faith home. The people who lived there believed that the city was founded by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. They believed their city was holy.

The ka’ba was a holy building in town where thousands of people would come to pray. Some of them believed and prayed to only one god, but most of them prayed to several gods. Statues representing these gods surrounded the ka’ba. Muhammad’s people prayed to their gods at the ka’ba, and Muhammad did, too.

Various people praying to many different gods at the ka’ba was part of everyday life for Muhammad. He witnessed it all the time.

One day, Muhammad heard what he could only explain as the voice of God speaking to him. Muhammad was instructed to be a prophet or teacher to people everywhere that there was only one God. And so, he began to teach.

Many people did not want to hear what Muhammad said. They wanted to continue to worship the gods the same way they always had, and not change. They threatened Muhammad and his followers.

Muhammad could have chosen to keep quiet, but he did not. He saw the world differently now. He believed he had a right and a responsibility to speak what he saw as the truth because God had told him to do so. It was important to him that this city, that was the faith home to many, be a home to what he believed was the one true faith.

Muhammad had to leave Makkah because it was dangerous for him there. He moved to Medina and his followers grew. They called their faith Islam and they acknowledged Islam’s connection to the prophets of Judaism and Christianity, who also prayed to only one god.

Even though he had many followers in his new home of Medina, who practiced Islam in a beautiful temple (or mosque, as they are called in Islam), Muhammad was not content. He believed that God wanted him to bring the faith of Islam to Makkah.

In 630 CE, he returned to Makkah and brought Islam to the city he had always considered his faith home. It is still the predominant faith in Makkah. It has also spread to many other places, and is now practiced by 1.8 billion people. It is the second largest religion in the world.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session15/60167.shtml>

***Stories from Scripture***

**3.20:** *Creation* (835 words)

Genesis 1: 1-31; 2:1-4 (New Revised Standard Version)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters form the waters.” So, God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So, God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our own image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

…

Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop8/creation>

**3.21:** *Noah’s Wife, The Story of Naamah* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (1,096 words)

Noah’s Wife: The Story of Naamah (C) Text 1996 Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Permission granted by Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, VT, www.jewishlights.com.

“Naamah” is pronounced “NAY-ma.”

In the time when the world was still young, plants and animals and people filled all creation. But the people were not always kind to one another.

In earth’s garden, there lived a man named Noah and a woman named Naamah. God said to Noah and Naamah, “There is too much hate on earth and in people’s hearts. But your hearts are good, and you can help me begin again.”

God said to Noah, “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Do this quickly, for I am about to bring a great flood to destroy all that is under the sky. Bring two of every animal that lives on this earth, birds and cattle and creeping things of every kind. Gather enough food for you and for them and store it in the ark.”

Then God called out to Naamah, “Walk across the land and gather the seeds of all the flowers and all the trees. Take two of every kind of living plant and bring each one onto the ark. They shall not be for food, but they shall be your garden, to tend and to keep. Work quickly. The rains begin tomorrow.” Naamah tied an apron of many pockets around her waist and walked through all of the earth’s fields and gardens. She journeyed into the forest and carefully gathered the spores from the moss that made a carpet at her feet. She placed them in the cool deep pockets of her apron, away from the light of the sun.

She came upon the giant redwoods. They carried their cones too high for her hands to reach. “God,” called Naamah, “blow me a wind so that the redwoods will let go of their seeds and I may gather them.” Just then a fierce howling sound blew through the forest and soon at Naamah’s feet were the cones of the redwoods.

Naamah picked acorns from the oak trees, and nuts from the pecan and pistachio. The winged seeds of the maples snapped under the gentle pull of her hands. She carefully lifted the seedlings of the cedar and cypress, the persimmon and plum. She found every tree, from acacia to ziziphus.

Naamah walked into the fields right past the dandelions, pretending not to notice their feathery yellow heads sprouting over the grass. “Naamah,” called God, “gather the seeds of every living plant!” And Naamah knew that God meant the dandelions too. Reluctantly, she placed their seeds in her pockets with all the others. Because Naamah had ignored them, God made certain that dandelions would cover the earth.

Naamah gathered the seeds of the sunflowers and buttercups, the orchids and jasmine. The fields blossomed with dahlias and daffodils, lilies and lavender. She picked two of every kind and planted them in red clay pots to carry onto the ark. She collected all the flowers, from the amaryllis to the zinnia.

Tomatoes burst with seed and avocado pits rested in their green fruit. The fields were ripe with potatoes and pomegranates, oranges and okra, lima beans and lemons. Naamah carried large straw baskets to hold all the varieties of fruits and vegetables, everything from apples to zucchini.

When Naamah had collected the seeds and seedlings of every living plant upon the earth, she arranged every plant and seed, each in its special place on the ark. Then she made a sign that said: NAAMAH’S GARDEN—these plants are not for food.

Then the sun disappeared, lightning flashed and thunder boomed. Dark clouds filled the sky and rain poured from the heavens until the waters covered all the lime green aspens and the emerald green pines.

Noah and Naamah looked out over the waters and were sad for all that had been destroyed. For forty days and forty nights the skies never brightened, and the rains never ceased.

On the ark, Noah and Naamah cared for the lions and the leopards, the porcupines and parrots, the oppossums and orangutans. Some of the animals liked to eat in the day, and others wanted to eat at night. Just as the squirrels closed their eyes for the evening, the owls hooted for food.

There were as many sounds as there were animals on the ark. The coyotes howled, the snakes hissed and the peacocks shrieked; the noise never stopped. Water was everywhere, but there was none for a bath. The smell of the animals filled the ark.

At these times Noah and Naamah would breathe the sweet aroma of the flowers and sit in the quiet of the plants that they called Naamah’s garden. They prayed for the rains to stop.

After forty days and forty nights, a rushing wind rolled over the waters and the rains ceased. The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. When Naamah and Noah looked out the window atop the ark, they saw the black sky soften into shades of blue.

Finally, the ground was dry and firm. Two by two, Noah led the animals from the ark. Some pranced, some flew, some slithered, and in this way they spread out over the earth.

Naamah carefully placed all the seeds and seedlings in the deep pockets of her apron. As soon as she set foot on the new land, Naamah knelt down, put her hands into the soft moist earth, and made small cradles in which to plant. She placed downy tufts of milkweed seeds in her palms and held them up to the sky to let the wind carry them in all directions.

Naamah took off her sandals and let her feet sink into the soft soil. She sighed with delight at the touch of the land. Morning gave way to afternoon, and Naamah worked without rest. As she patted the earth around a small raspberry bush, a dark red berry fell generously into her hand. The taste of ripened raspberry refreshed her.

God saw all that Naamah had planted and God said, “Because of your great love for the earth, I will make you guardian of all living plants.” For a single moment, God gave Naamah’s eyes the vision to see into the future and from one end of the earth to the other. She saw how the seeds were carried great distances, and how they landed softly on the soft ground. As God had promised, dandelions were everywhere.

Naamah delighted in how the trees grew tall and spread umbrellas of shade over the earth. Flowers sprinkled yellow, peach and lilac over the fields. To this day whenever someone digs in the earth and plants a seed, Naamah’s garden continues to grow.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session8/naamah>

**3.22:** *Nathan Confronts David* (339 words)

2 Samuel 12: 1-10 (New Revised Standard Version)

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He [Nathan] came to him [David], and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He [The poor man] brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler [a guest who came] to the rich man, and he [the rich man] was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer [guest] who had come to him, but he [the rich man] took the poor man’s lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him. Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man [rich man in Nathan’s story]. He said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the [rich] man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, ... and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.”

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop2/nathan-confronts-david>

**3.24:** *Manna in the Wilderness* (798 words)

Exodus 16: 1-31; 35 (New Revised Standard Version)

The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness.... The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?” ...

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and said, “I have heard the complaining of the Israelites and say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then shall you know that I am the Lord your God.’”

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer [a unit of measure—about 3.7 quarts] to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.’” The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered more had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning. So, they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none.”

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. The Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.” So, the people rested on the seventh day.

The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey...The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop3/manna>

**3.25:** *The Binding of Isaac* (374 words)

Genesis 22: 1-13 (New Revised Standard Version)

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.” So, Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to the young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.” Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So, the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He [Isaac] said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So, the two of them walked on together.

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop6/binding-of-isaac>

**3.26:** *Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham* (1,042 words)

Genesis 15:1-5; Genesis 16: 1-11, 13-16, Genesis 17: 1- 5, 15-16; Genesis 21: 1-3, 6, 8-19 (New Revised Standard Version)

... the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless and the heir of my house is [my servant] Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” But the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your own issue shall be your heir.” He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And then he said, “So shall your descendants be.”

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, “You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked down on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!” but Abram said to Arai, “Your slave-girl is in your power; do with her as you please. Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she [Hagar] ran away from her [Sarai].

The angel of the Lord found her by a spring in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, “Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.” The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.” The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.” And the angel of the Lord said to her,

Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; You shall call him Ishmael [God hears] for the Lord has given heed to your affliction...

So, she named the Lord who spoke to her, “You are Elroi [God of seeing],” for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?” Therefore, the well was called Beer-lahai-roi [Well of the Living one who sees me]; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I am God almighty; walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you; you shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham...

God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her.”

The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son whom Sarah bore him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”

The child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So, she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.” The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.” So, Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of my child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop5/sarah-hagar-abraham>

**3.27:** *Isaiah—Exile and Hope* (417 words)

Isaiah 52: 1-2, 13-15; 53: 1-8, 54: 2-4, 7-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

Awake, awake,

Put on your strength O Zion!

Put on your beautiful garments...

Shake yourself from the dust and rise up, O captive Jerusalem;

Loose the bonds from your neck,

O captive daughter Zion!

... See, my servant will prosper;

He shall be exalted and lifted up

... So, he shall startle many nations;

kings shall shut their mouths because of him;

for that which had not been told them they shall see,

and that which they had not heard

they shall contemplate.

Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant,

like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,

nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by others;

a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;

and as one from whom others hide their faces

he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely, he has borne our infirmities

and carried our diseases;

yet we accounted him stricken,

struck down by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,

crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the punishment that made us whole,

and by his bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have all turned to our own way,

and the Lord has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

yet he did not open his mouth;

like a lamb he is led to the slaughter,

and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,

so, he did not open his mouth.

By a perversion of justice he was taken away.

Who could have imagined his future?

Enlarge the site of your tent,

and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;

do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

For you will spread out to the right and to the left,

and your descendants will possess the nations

and will settle the desolate towns.

Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed;

do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace;

... For a brief moment I abandoned you,

but with great compassion I will gather you.

In overflowing wrath for a moment

I hid my face from you,

but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,

says the Lord, your Redeemer.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop7/isaiah>

**3.28:** Job, Based on Hebrew scripture (640 words)

Have you heard about Job? He had quite a story. You can find it in Hebrew scripture—the Book of Job.

Job lived in the land of Uz, and at the beginning, he was a happy man—as he should have been. He had ten great kids and a wonderful wife. He was wealthy, and he was a pious man. That meant he believed in God, prayed every day and gave thanks often for everything that he received. God seemed very pleased with him. “He’s a great example,” said God.

Then Satan came along and spoke to God. Satan said that Job loved God only because God was so good to Job. “I’ll bet,” said Satan, “that if Job’s life turns bad, then Job will turn against you, God. Job will curse and complain.”  
“You are on,” said God. He gave Satan permission to test Job any way he liked—as long as Job stayed alive.

That was enough for Satan. Soon messengers started bringing bad news to Job. Thieves had taken his donkeys and oxen. Fire had killed some sheep and servants.

Job did not understand. “Woe unto me if I am wicked,” he said. But he felt innocent.

Job kept worshipping God. When he heard that a wind had destroyed a house and killed all ten of his children inside it, he fell to the ground and praised God. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb,” he said, “and naked shall I return there; God gave, and God has taken away; blessed be the name of God.”

“Look at that,” God said to Satan, but Satan was not done. Now it was time to destroy Job’s health, and Satan did. Job got sores all over his body, bad dreams, peeling skin, and more.

Job’s wife said he should curse God and die. But Job refused. He kept praising God.

Then three friends turned against him. It seemed they may have envied Job when everything was going well. Now they blamed him for his own suffering. “God is punishing you,” they said. “Because you were not good.”

Job might have wondered that himself. How was Job to know that God was testing him, not punishing him? In fact, God was really very impressed with Job. So, when Job asked for answers, God finally spoke, in a voice that came out of a storm. Even though questioning God was possibly the first bad thing Job had ever done.

God asked Job a whole slew of big questions—about creation, about life, about much, much more. Job began to see how great God really was. God was much too great for Job to understand. “Sorry, God,” he said. “I can never understand you.” Or that’s what he would have said, if he had spoken American English.

The Bible quotes Job like this. Job said to God (in Aramaic, maybe) “I know that you can do all things. No plan of yours can be thwarted... Surely, I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

“That’s okay,” said God. “No problem.” Or so God might have said in American English. But however, God said it, God forgave Job for questioning him—only because Job had been so good, all along, and had passed Satan’s test. God paused for a moment to scold Job’s friends, and demanded a sacrifice from them for not being as good as Job. Then God turned back to Job and gave him great reward.

Job’s new life was even better than before. He had more animals, and seven new sons and three new daughters. He lived happily for 140 more years, and he kept praising God through them all.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session7/job>

**3.29:** *The Battle of Jericho* (1,160 words)

Joshua 1: 1-3, Joshua 2:1-7,15-18, 21, Joshua 6: 1-25 (New Revised Standard Version)

... The Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun... saying, “... Now proceed to cross the Jordan [River], you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you....

Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittum as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So, they went, and entered the house of a woman [Note: the biblical text uses the word prostitute here] whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. The king of Jericho was told, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.” Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land.” But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, “True, the men did come to me, but I did not know where they came from. And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went, I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.” She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax she had lain out on the roof. So the men pursued them on the way to Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut...

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. She said to them, “Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way.” The men said to her, “... tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down ... and gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your family... “She said, “According to your words, so be it.” She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied a crimson cord in the window.

Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. The Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus, you shall do for six days, with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. When they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, as soon as you shall hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead.” So, Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, “Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark of the Lord.” To the people he said, “Go forward and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord.”

As Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them. And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. To the people Joshua gave this command: “You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.” So, the ark of the Lord went around the city, circling it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the Lord passed on, blowing the trumpets continually. The armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets blew continually. On the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city. The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute [woman] and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord.” So, the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so, the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the prostitute’s [woman’s] house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her.” So, the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her- they brought all her kindred out- and set them outside the camp of Israel. They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. But Rahab..., with all her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family has lived in Jericho ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Israel.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop4/jericho>

**3.30:** *Jesus Teaches the Beatitudes* (347 words)

An adaptation of Matthew 5:1-11, Christian scripture.

Jesus was a teacher. He lived thousands of years ago; in the part of the world we now call the Middle East. Jesus taught people how to use words and actions in a loving manner.

There are many different ideas about God. Jesus’ idea about God was that God is a kind father who wanted us to treat each other kindly and with love.

People loved to listen to Jesus. One day there were so many people waiting to be taught by Jesus, he had to climb way up a mountain. Sitting on the mountain, he could see far away. The people just kept coming. There were families with children and teenagers and elders. There were fishermen and farmers and shepherds. Some shepherds had their sheep and goats, stopping on their way home from grazing.

Jesus called his friends to come and sit by him on the mountain. Then all of a sudden it got quiet. People were ready to listen to Jesus. They watched him and listened to his words. Jesus taught all the people of all ages a lesson called the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes teach us how to treat other people. The Beatitudes teach us how to act. Jesus knew our relationships with each other are the most important thing about life. Let’s listen now to the words from Jesus, the teacher. Listen for what kinds of people he asks us to pay attention to:

* Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they will one day get to heaven
* Blessed are those who are sad, for they will be comforted
* Blessed are those who are gentle, for they will have all the earth
* Blessed are those who seek justice, for they will make a difference
* Blessed are those who forgive, for they will be forgiven
* Blessed are those who treat others with kindness, for they will see God
* Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God
* Blessed are those who try to do the right thing, for they will go to heaven.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/session2/jesus-teaches>

***Other***

**3.31:** *From Scientific Law to Kants Moral Law* (553 words)

Immanuel Kant, a key figure in the field of philosophy, was born in what is now Germany. He grew up in a Lutheran household, part of a family that particularly emphasized piety and vigorous religious devotion. At the age of 16, he enrolled at the University of Konigsberg, and went on to spend his entire career as a member of the faculty there. His best-known and most important published work is The Critique of Pure Reason, first published in 1781.

Kant was a theist, and his religious beliefs provided an underpinning for his understanding of the world. As scientists of his time discovered and described natural laws, Kant came to believe that similar moral laws existed and would become clearer over time. Underlying his theory was a belief in a divine hand that provided order to what we otherwise might term chaos or randomness. He believed that our evolving understanding of scientific and moral laws moved us gradually closer to God.

In 1755, at the age of 31, he published Theory of the Heavens, a book that built on Isaac Newton’s description of the basic physical laws that govern our solar system and our lives. Kant hypothesized that stars were created out of the material of nebulae, that stars spiraled around the center of galaxies, and that the galaxies spiraled around the center of the universe. Although we now know that much of what Kant hypothesized was correct, his observations about the universe went largely unnoticed during his time, in part because the publisher of his book went bankrupt.

Kant’s observation and description of the cosmological order that determined the formation and movements of stars was, to him, proof that the universe was governed by laws. Following this train of logic, Kant concluded there must also be moral laws that govern human behavior. Following a process similar to what had led to the discovery of physical laws, human understanding of moral laws would be initially imperfect and would evolve over time, moving humanity toward clearer and more complete understanding. He argued that—following the pattern set by physical, scientific laws—moral laws must be true in all situations.

As a test for determining whether a particular action is in harmony with the laws of morality, Kant developed his famous concept of the Categorical Imperative, the idea that an action is morally acceptable if it can be universalized, or done by everyone who finds themselves in a similar situation. For example, Kant’s theory tests the moral acceptability of stealing, even something as small as a paper clip from your workplace, by asking what would happen if everyone stole from their workplace. When the end result of a universalized action does not seem right to us, then the individual act must be unacceptable.

Kant’s work is closely associated with deontological ethics, a rules-based ethics which the emphasizes the end result. In this ethical schema, the final outcome matters more than the countervailing circumstances or the means by which we arrive at a result. Proponents of deontological ethics hold that the moral laws or moral principles one develops are always and, in every circumstance, correct, and one must adhere to them, even when it is difficult to do so.

Kant’s work made him an important and influential figure in his lifetime, and his influence continues today.

Source:<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/ethics/workshop2/191750.shtml>

**4.0: Children’s Books about God / Goddess / The Divine, Creation, and Gaia**

# *God / Goddess / The Divine*

# 4.1: *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* by Carole Boston Weatherford, author and Kadir Nelson, illustrator (2006)

# Image result for Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom“Tubman’s religious faith drives this handsome, poetic account of her escape to freedom and role in the Underground Railroad. The story begins with Tubman addressing God on a summer night as she is about to be sold south from the Maryland plantation where she and her husband live: ‘I am Your child, Lord; yet Master owns me, / drives me like a mule. In ‘resounding bold text, God tells her He means for her to be free. The story is sketched between passages of prayerful dialogue that keep Tubman from giving up and eventually call upon her to be the Moses of [her] people.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECF9d5fC8S0> (14:00)

# 4.2: *Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman* by Alan Schroeder, author and Jerry Pinkney, illustrator (2000)

# Image result for Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman“They called her ‘Minty.’ When she grew up, she became Harriet Tubman, the courageous and heroic woman who helped hundreds of slaves escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad. But she was just a little girl for a while—and this is her story. Minty, short for Araminta, was a feisty and headstrong young slave, whose rebellious spirit often got her into trouble. She told stories to her doll, released animals from traps, and, above all, dreamed of running away. And when her father began to teach her the skills necessary for escape, she listened carefully, and learned.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xd0gh8F-pIM> (1849)

Video Link:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsE_gPQvKQ8> (22:58) (story told through words & jazz)

# Teaching Resource: <https://www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org/BookModule/Minty>

**4.3:** *Ladder to the Moon* by Maya Soetoro-Ng, author and Yuyi Morales, illustrator (2011)

# Image result for Ladder to the Moon by Maya Soetoro-Ng “Little Suhaila wishes she could have known her grandma, who would wrap her arms around the whole world if she could, Mama says. And one night, Suhaila gets her wish when a golden ladder appears at her window and Grandma Annie invites the girl to go along with her on a magical journey. Maya Soetoro-Ng and Yuyi Morales’s dreamlike tale reminds us that loved ones lost are always with us, and that sometimes we need only look at the moon and remember.”

# “Creation stories, mythology, and legends come together in a story incorporating themes of human struggle, community, and faith.”

# “A vision of divine love, a love incarnated in a warm, round, brown-skinned grandmother....”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itBfpV3xSS8> (10:03)

# Image result for What Is God? by Etan Boritzer4.4: *What Is God*? by Etan Boritzer, author and Robbie Marantz, illustrator (1990)

# “What is God? is an eloquent introduction to the ideas behind God and religion, and brings forward complex ideas in a way that children will understand. It is written with a simple clarity and beautifully illustrated with just the right blend of seriousness and humor.

# “What is God? compares different religions -- Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism -- and their holy books, looks at misunderstandings and arguments among people of different religions, and talks about praying as well as feeling connected to everything in the world.

# “If you want to talk about spirituality with a child, or introduce them to philosophy or religion, or just help them to begin to center themselves and their feelings about the world, this book is a great beginning.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kg4Cvowey00> (1:14) teaser, shares three pages

# 4.5: *On the Day You Were Born* by Debra Frasier, author (1993)

# Image result for On the Day You Were Born by Debra Frasier A different take on creation.

# “This book can be read to a very young child all the way to an elder person. It is a song that celebrates the reality that we are born into the whole universe, made part of something so much greater than just our small selves. But we are important to all creatures as they are important to us. A simple extension and illustration of what the physicists call ‘the butterfly effect.’ The illustrations are clear and colorful. The rhythm of the prose appealing. And the end a glorious ‘We’re so glad you are here!’”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JRuNF5UXjk> (5:07) (words set to music and sung)

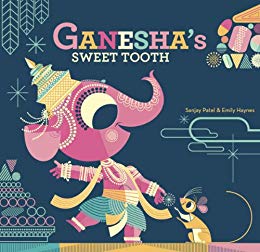
# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkED97klSOQ>

# 4.6: *Ilyas and Duck Search for Allah* by Omar S. Khawaja, author and Leo Antolini, illustrator (2012)

# Image result for Ilyas and Duck Search for Allah by Omar S. Khawaja “Ilyas and Duck Search for Allah is an adorable adventure in which the two main characters go on a quest to look for Allah. One night, Ilyas wonders about the location of Allah and after discussing this with his good pal Duck, they concoct some ideas of where they might find Him. After encountering a number of unusual and interesting animals along the way, all of whom tell the duo something unique about themselves that Allah has created, Ilyas and Duck realize that they can’t actually see Allah like they can see the animals…. Ilyas comes to the realization that ‘We see Allah through all His creations. And through them we believe Allah to be true.’”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRyzZJwMiy8> (8:06)

**4.7:** *Ganesha’s Sweet Tooth* by Sanjay Patel & Emily Haynes, authors and Sanjay Patel, illustrator (2012

 “[Ganesha is] a kid with a wicked sweet tooth, which combined with his hubris leads him to bite into a jawbreaker candy that breaks his tusk. As he confronts his fear of being ridiculed for his ‘lopsided’ looks, complaining to his best friend Mr. Mouse, he runs into Vyasa, the poet. The old man tells the young elephant god that he’s been looking for him because he needed a scribe to write his poem about ‘the beginning of things,’ which was so long that ‘all the pens in the world would break before it was done.’ The two strike a deal for Ganesha to use his broken tusk to write the poem without stopping, as long as he understood the meaning of it all. And 100,000 verses later The Mahabharata was finished and the broken tusk that Ganesha once tried to toss away now had value and his looks were much less important.”

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X7YMBxCDOE> (9:08)

# 4.8: *Maybe God Is Like That Too* by Jennifer Grant, author and Benjamin Schipper, illustrator (2017)

 “Every child wonders where God lives or what God is like. In Maybe God Is Like That Too, a young boy asks his grandma where God is in their city. She invites him to pay attention to where he sees the fruit of the Spirit. Where love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are, there too is God. The boy sees God in the kindness of a doorman holding the door for a man using a wheelchair, in the patience of his teacher helping him tie his shoes, and in the love, faithfulness, and gentleness of his grandma. An ordinary day in his city opens this young boy’s eyes to God’s Spirit at work all around him.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jknhdB8ZHI> (7:49)

# Image result for Old Turtle by Douglas Wood4.9: *Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood, author and Cheng-Khee Chee, illustrator (2007)

“Who is God? Is He a wind that is never still? Is He a rock that never moves? Is He high above or here among us? Venerable Old Turtle answers quietly: God is all of these things.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0itq-Uk43mE> (6:46)

# 4.10: *Does God Have a Big Toe? Stories About Stories in the Bible* by Marc Gellman, author and Oscar de Mejo, illustrator (1989)

# Image result for Does God Have a Big Toe? Stories About Stories in the Bible “Before there was anything, there was God, and a few angels, and a huge swirling glob of rocks and water with no place to go. The angels asked God, “Why don’t you clean up this mess?”

# “This collection of short, funny stories is one man’s interpretation of how God did just that—with some very unlikely help.

# “There was Adam, who decided to number the animals instead of giving them names—until he lost count. There was Max, a matchmaking angel disguised as a camel. And who could forget the kindly dolphins of the Red Sea or the builders of the spectacularly chaotic Tower of Babel, whose foundation rests in one small girl’s question: ‘Mommy, does God have a big toe?”

# “Reflecting Mr. Gellman’s lifelong love for his subject, this witty collection of midrashim provides a wonderful way to learn about and to share the stories of the Bible. Distinguished artist Oscar de Mejo brings the right blend of reverence and humor with his magnificent oil paintings.”

# 4.11: *God’s Paintbrush* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, author and Annette Compton, illustrator (1992)

# Image result for God’s Paintbrush by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso“This classic ...uses questions and drawings to invite children to encounter God during moments and activities in their own lives. One kid thinks of a sunbeam as God’s paintbrush and wonders what color to paint the world today. Two children at the beach imagine that the rain is God’s tears and the giant waves with white foam on the top make God laugh. The author asks, ‘What do you think would make God cry or laugh?’ ... The interactive approach of this wonder-inducing book encourages adults to join in the quest to discover God in the everyday.”

# 4.12: *When God Was A Little Girl*: *A Story About God, Creation, and What it Means to be Human* by David R. Weiss, author and Joan Lindeman, illustrator (2015)

# Image result for When God Was A Little Girl: A Story About God, Creation, and What “‘Tell me a story, Daddy about when God was a little girl.’ Susanna’s playful request begins a whimsically profound tale woven between father and daughter. Together they retell the familiar story of creation, but with unexpected twists and insightful turns along the way. The exuberant joy of God’s creative energy sparkles in this tale that honors both interconnection and diversity. Between the gentle wisdom in the text and the beautiful paintings that accompany it, you may never think about God, creation, or yourself in quite the same way.”

# 4.13: *Where’s Buddha?* by Marisa Aragón Ware (2019)

# Image result for Where’s Buddha? by Marisa Aragón Ware “Follow Buddha on a wild journey—from mountain peaks, to the ocean deep, past Saturn’s rings, and butterfly wings. This sweet story reveals that Buddha can be found everywhere you go.”

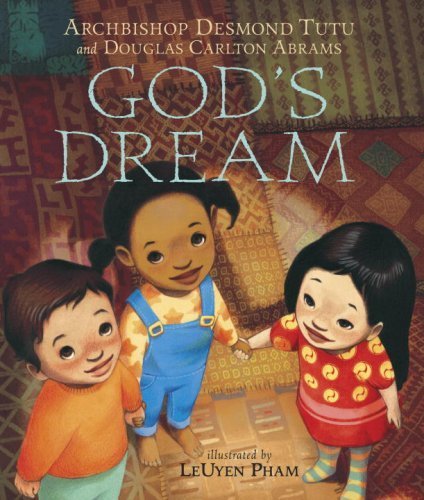
# “Buddha smiles serenely from snowy mountain peaks, through summer monsoon rains and deep ocean waters, reassuring children of his calm, surrounding presence in every season. Vibrant artwork and rhythmic verses add an element of fun as the Buddha, in his traditional saffron robes, gazes peacefully from the portal of a submarine or through a taxi’s front windshield, his hand outstretched to feel the rain or feed a giraffe, or resting still in nature and in hearts around the world.”

# While Buddha is not generally thought to be God, in the Mahayana School of Buddhism the Buddha is considered a savior and by some a God.

# 4.14: *The Apple Tree: The Prophet Says Series* by Mariam Al-Kalby, author and Yee Von Chan, illustrator (2013)

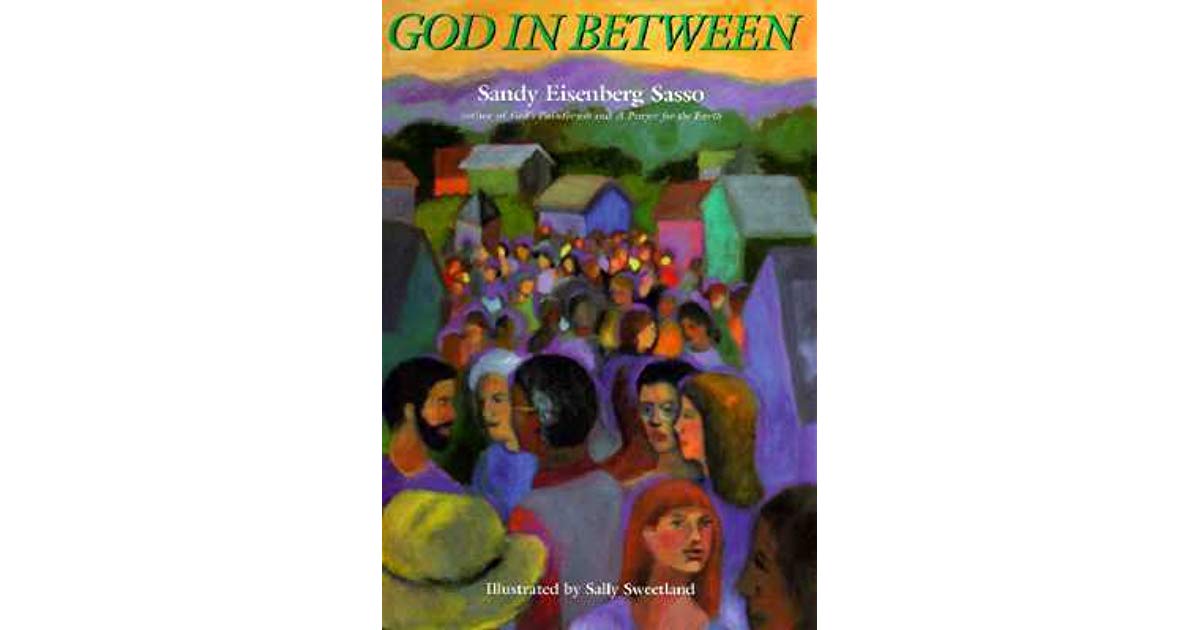
# Image result for The Apple Tree: The Prophet Says Series “Little Shaima plants a seed with her father in their front yard to grow a beautiful apple tree. Her father attempts to convince her that sharing whatever apples grow would be considered an act of charity. When apples finally grow on her tree, however, she becomes reluctant to share them with others. Then when she notices the happiness the apples bring to her friends, animals and birds, she begins to understand the merits of freely giving them away. This story follows Shaima’s inner struggle to overcome her own selfishness and discover the joy of sharing with others.”

# 4.15: *God’s Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu & Douglas Carlton Abrams, authors and LeUyen Pham, illustrator (2008)

 “Archbishop Desmond Tutu has a vision of God’s dream, which he shares here with the youngest of listeners. It involves people who reach out and hold each other’s hands, but sometimes get angry and hurt each other—and say they’re sorry and forgive. It’s a wish that everyone will see they are brothers and sisters, no matter their way of speaking to God, no matter the size of their nose or the shade of their skin. Aided by vibrant artwork evoking such images as a rainbow and a sharing circle, Tutu offers the essence of his ubuntu philosophy, a wisdom so clear and crystalline that even the smallest child can understand.”

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mE3Ue2PKahI> (5:47)

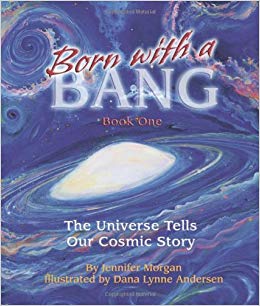
**4.16:** *God in Between* by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, author and Sally Sweetland, illustrator (1998)

 “This is the magical, mythical tale of a poor village at the foot of a hill—a topsy-turvy town with no roads and no windows, where the people sneeze through tall tangled weeds and trip over rocks as big as watermelons. Surely God would help them, they decide … but how can God be found, and where should they look? They soon find that the answer is much nearer than they thought.

“This story teaches that God can be found where we are: within all of us and the relationships between us.”

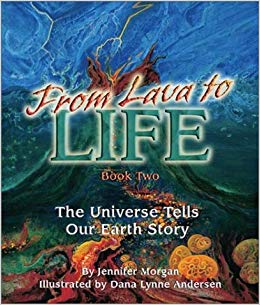
# *Creation*

# 4.17: *Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story*: Book 1 by Jennifer Morgan, author and Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator (2002)

 “Lots of people have gotten very excited about this book and its sequels. It succeeds at telling the amazing story of the universe and the creation of Earth with scientific accuracy but without diminishing the mystery and wonder.”

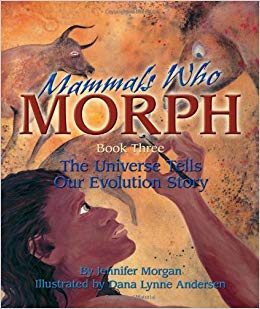
Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VCwtrLlDck> (7:27)

# 4.18: *From Lava to Life: The Universe Tells Our Earth Story: Book 2* by Jennifer Morgan, author and Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator (2003)

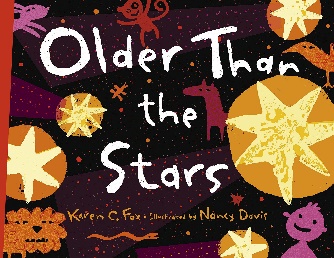
 “Once upon a time’ meets science in a children’s picture book that tells the thrilling story of how life began on Earth.

“The second in a trilogy of Universe stories ― the first being “Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story” ― this book picks up the story with the first appearance of life on Earth. It’s a thrilling story about how Earth triumphs over crisis to become bacteria, jellyfish, flowers...even dinosaurs!”

# 4.19: *Mammals Who Morph: The Universe Tells Our Evolution Story Book 3* by Jennifer Morgan, author and Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator (2006)

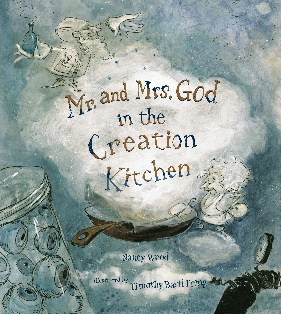
 “This remarkable evolution series, narrated by the Universe itself, concludes with this third book, the amazing story of mammals and humans. It picks up after *From Lava to Life: The Universe Tells Our Earth Story* with the extinction of dinosaurs, and tells how tiny mammals survived and morphed into lots of new Earthlings ... horses, whales and a kind of mammal with a powerful imagination you! It is a story of chaos, creativity and heroes the greatest adventure on Earth! And it is a personal story...about our bodies, our minds, and spirits. It is our story. As the president of the American Montessori Society said, ‘These books are alive with wonder, radiance, and deep relevance.’”

# 4.20: *Older Than the Stars* by Karen C. Fox, author and Nancy Davis, illustrator (2010)

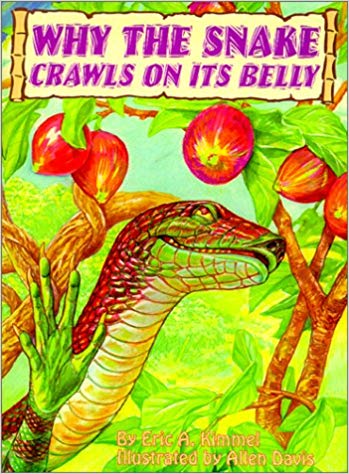
 “This lively and vibrant picture book offers an introduction to the science between The Big Bang theory and other cosmology that explains the beginning of the universe. In a way, we are all as old as the stars and the universe itself. In fact, every bit of every one of us was created billions of years ago from the same stuff as stars. Stunningly bright illustrations and simple verse tell the story of the cosmic connections that tie human beings to the beginning of the universe. Simple, informative prose provides additional facts.”

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lp1_dCIXqSw> (4:25)

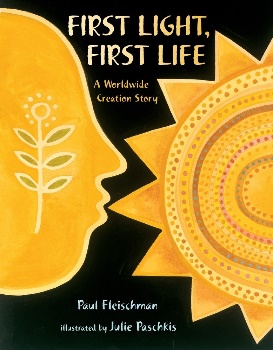
**4.21:** *Mr. and Mrs. God in the Creation Kitchen* by Nancy Wood, author and Timothy Basil Ering, illustrator (2005)

 “Deep in the heavens, in the space between the clouds, Mr. and Mrs. God are hard at work in their Creation Kitchen. They’ve got frying pans and mixing bowls, beaters and whisks, and an oven big enough to roast a star - which is just what they are doing! After the sun and earth are finished, all kinds of interesting creations come next, with beaks and claws and growls and roars baked right in. When each creature is cooked to perfection, they set it down on Earth. But that’s only the beginning…”

**4.22:** *Why the Snake Crawls on its Belly* by Eric Kimmel, author and Allen Davis, illustrator (2001)

 “A ladder stands in the Garden of Eden, reaching all the way to Heaven. Adam and Eve go up and down the ladder as they please, singing with the angels and talking to God. When the snake convinces them to sin, the ladder is broken. God and the angels decide the snake’s punishment, but so the snake does not give up hope, he is given the opportunity to periodically shed his skin and start over again. Eventually, the snake may understand his mistake and, in the future, will take his place next to man on the ladder to Heaven.”

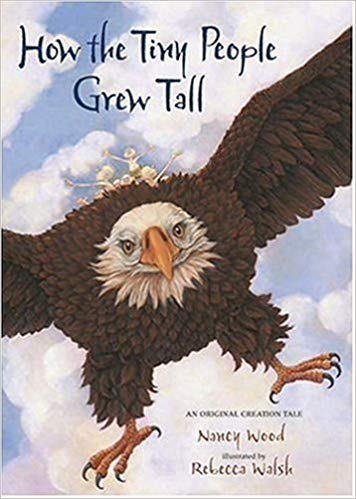
**4.23:** *First Light, First Life: A Worldwide Creation Story* by Paul Fleischman, author and Julie Paschkis, illustrator

 “In the beginning there was only darkness…. There was fire and ice.… There was a single drop of milk.

“Combining elements of the creation story from different traditions, this narrative weaves together one complete picture of how the world began. First Light, First Life is a celebration of the many and varied peoples of the earth, of their commonalities and their differences. It is a celebration of life.”

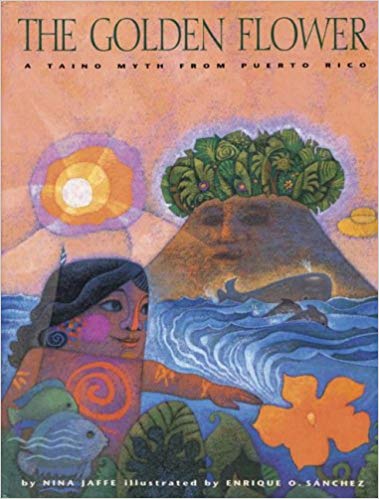
Teaching Resources: <https://www.rif.org/literacy-central/book/first-light-first-life-worldwide-creation-story>

**4.24:** *How the Tiny People Grew Tall: An Original Creation Tale* by Nancy Wood, author and Rebecca Walsh, illustrator (2005)

 “A long time ago, when everything was new, the Tiny People lived in the Center of the Earth. It was hot and crowded.

“‘Let’s get out of here,’ says the smallest and boldest of the Tiny People under the earth. But it’s not until a star crashes into the ground that they first see the blue sky above—and each other—and dare to crawl up a cornstalk into a strange, scary world. Terrified but curious, the wee folk hitch rides with Eagle, Turtle, and Bear, who advise them to rise above the earth, take their time, and be strong, just like them. Other creatures show how to build a home and find food. And sure enough, after many seasons, the Tiny People grow as tall as young trees and are ready to kick up their heels and celebrate with all the animal friends who have taught them so well.”

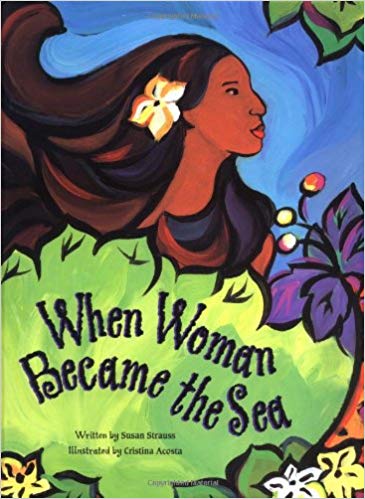
**4.25:** *The Golden Flower: A Taino Myth from Puerto Rico* by Nina Jaffe, author and Enrique O. Sanchez, illustrator (2005)

 “The syncopated prose of Nina Jaffe draws the reader to the island of Puerto Rico, back before the Spaniards arrived. The island was inhabited by the Taínos, and they called their beloved island, Boriquén. This is their story of how Boriquén came to be.

“ In the beginning, there is only a giant mountain above a dry plain without water or plants. When a child walks over the flat land below the mountain, he finds seeds dancing in the wind. When he plants the seeds on the top of the mountain, a forest grows on the crest and in that forest, a large golden flower appears. Soon, the boy and his community reap benefits that they had never before imagined.”

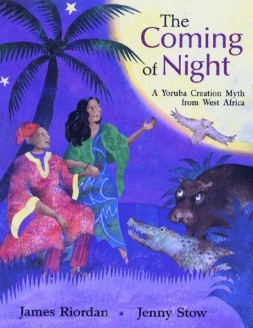
Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v0TZoA7vrQ> (5:28)

**4.26:** *When Woman Became the Sea: A Costa Rican Creation Myth* by Susan Strauss, author and Cristina Acosta, illustrator (1998)

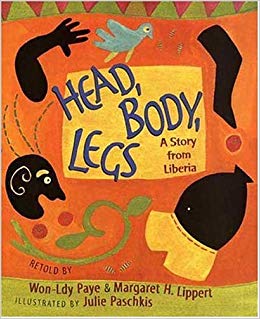
 “Sibu has created the world, filling it with mountains, valleys, jungles, and many creatures. But something is missing. He enlists his friend Thunder to help complete the world, but Thunder is too busy cracking and booming to pay attention.

“So Sibu creates woman, making her as beautiful as the skies and the earth. Thunder, spellbound by this woman named Sea, takes her as his bride. Sea finds herself caught between Sibu and Thunder’s demands, so she decides to go off by herself Once alone, she is bitten by an enchanted snake. A series of magical transformations takes place in Sea, turning her into a wondrous tree that attracts birds of every color and feather. Sibu, annoyed by the ensuing racket, has two birds destroy the tree, and as it comes crashing down, all the water in the world -- seas, oceans, lakes, and rivers -- comes pouring from the trunk. Of course, it was water that was missing all along!”

**4.27:** *The Coming of Night: A Yoruba Creation Myth from West Africa* by James Riordan, author and Jenny Stow, illustrator (2011)

 “Long, long ago, when the earth was new, the great river goddess Yemoya sent her daughter Aje to marry a handsome earth chief in the Land of Shining Day. At first Aje was happy, but soon she started to pine for the cool shadows of her mother’s realm. So, her husband asked Crocodile and Hippopotamus to bring Aje a sackful of Night. As they carried it back, the animals heard strange noises coming from the sack - and curiosity finally got the better of them....”

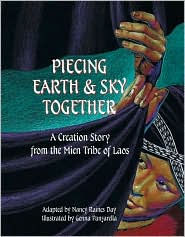
**4.28:** *Head, Body, Legs: A Story from Liberia* by Won-Ldy Paye & Margaret H. Lippert, authors, and Julie Paschkis, illustrator (2005)

 “A magical retelling of a Liberian creation story. Head is all alone. Body bounces along. Arms swing about. Legs stand around. They can’t do much by themselves, so they try to work together. But how? This vibrant, joyous retelling of a traditional Liberian creation story shows how much can be accomplished with a little cooperation.”

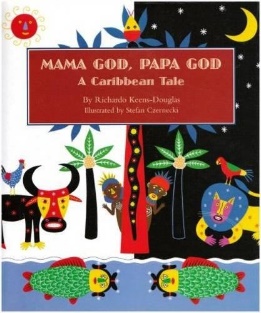
Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXmFhjQhgpk> (4:54)

Shadow Puppet Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R_N_YejdmQ> (4:07)

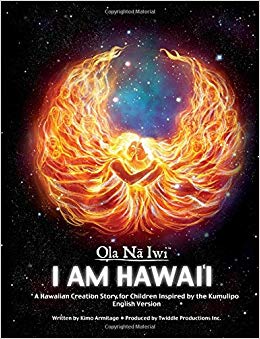
**4.29:** *Piecing Earth and Sky Together: A Creation Story from the Mien Tribe of Laos* by Nancy Raines Day, author and Genna Panzarella, illustrator (2001)

 “While she and her grandmother work on their embroidery, Mei Yoon listens to an old Mein tale about the creation of the earth and the sky.” Two siblings, a brother and a sister, work independently on their embroidery. The bother’s sky is too small for the sister’s earth, so they must help each other to piece them together.

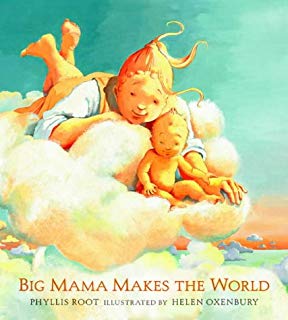
**4.30:** *Mama God, Papa God: A Caribbean Tale* by Richardo Keens-Douglas, author and Stefan Czernecki, illustrator (1999)

 “This West Indian tale revisits the creation story from a new perspective. Both Mama God and Papa God create the world.”

**4.31:** *Ola Na Iwi: I Am Hawaii: A Hawaiian Creation Story for Children Inspired by the Kumulipo* by Kimo Armitage, author and many illustrators including Michael Q. Ceballos & Matthew Kawika Ortiz (2016)

 “The Creation of Hawaii told in this beautifully illustrated children’s book will capture the hearts and imaginations of young readers as wondrous creatures from the ocean and land emerge from the time of darkness until the birth of man heralds the period of light. The heart-wrenching story of Wakea and Haohokakalani, ancestors to Hawaiians, becomes a lesson for the way that we must take care of the earth so that it continues to nourish us.”

**4.32:** *Big Momma Makes the World* by Phyllis Root, author and Helen Oxenbury, illustrator (2002)

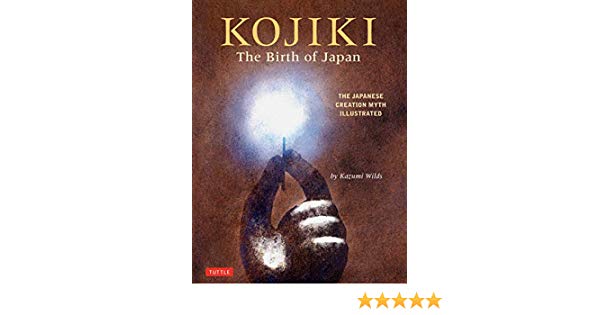
 “‘Earth,’ said Big Momma, ‘Get over here.’ And it did. All one big ball of mud it was, nothing much to look at. Baby liked it all right just the way it was, but Big Momma wasn’t finished yet.

“When Big Momma makes the world, she doesn’t mess around. With a little baby on her hip and laundry piling up, she demands light and dark, earth and sky, creepers and crawlers, and lots of folks to trade stories with on the front porch. And when the work is done, Big Momma, she is pleased all right. ‘That’s good,’ she says. ‘That’s real good.’

“With down-home language and infectious rhythms, storyteller Phyllis Root spins a creation myth like no other, brilliantly illustrated by the incomparable Helen Oxenbury.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9mYHw8W4aI> (7:54)

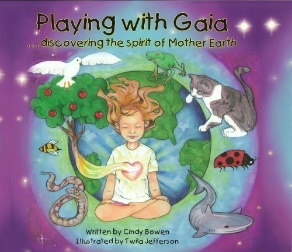
**4.33:***Kojiki: The Birth of Japan* by Kazumi Wilds, author (2019)

 “In the beginning there was nothing—a void. Then the heavens and the earth took shape, as the ancient gods of Japan breathed the first sparks of life into these islands. The 1300-year-old Kojiki myth traces the beginnings of the Japanese people, following the rise of the Japanese islands from their humble origins as a lump of clay to a great nation that would one day take its rightful place among the leading nations of the world.” For readers 14 & up

# Sample Pages: <https://www.overdrive.com/media/4644470/kojiki>

# *Gaia*

# 4.34: *Playing with Gaia: discovering the spirit of Mother Earth* by Cindy Bowen, author and Twila Jefferson, illustrator (2009)

 “Play with the ever-present energy of life in Mother Earth—play with Gaia! This is not yoga, dance or tai chi; it is an awakening and discovery of playfulness and inner freedom. Open a new doorway with yourself or the children in your life. Together you can heal wounds, dissolve boundaries, create deep inner bonds and bring new creativity and awareness into your world.”

# Video Teaser:

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDKZ2OL9VGM> (1:13)

# 4.35: *Everything is Connected* by Jason Gruhl, author and Ignasi Font, illustrator (2019)

 “This is a magical story about the powerful idea that we are connected to absolutely everything in the universe. ‘Everything is connected. And since you are part of everything, you are connected to everything: to pharaohs, Ben Franklin, T. Rex, ancient Greece, to love and to poverty, hunger and peace!’”

**5.0: Music & Videos for Children (no resources identified)**

**6.0: Curriculum & Theme-Based Classroom Activities for Children for Authority, Leadership, and Power**

# *from Tapestry of Faith*

**6.1: Wonderful Welcome: A Program for Children Grades K-1**

**6.1.1:** *Session 8: The Gift of Families*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session8>

“This session will:

* Guide participants to consider the intangible gifts they bring to and receive from members of their families
* Explore ways to share intangible gifts within our families
* Apply the first and second Unitarian Universalist Principles — the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations —to our family life.”
* [Through the story about the life of Chang Kung, participants will encounter the quality of kindness as an attribute of God.]”

**6.1.2:** *Session 9: The Gift of Mutual Sharing*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session9>

(Note: Use Alternate Activity 2 Story—St. Francis and the Wolf which includes how St. Francis restored peace between the people of Gubbio and a wolf by drawing upon his faith in God.)

“This session will:

* Demonstrate spiritual, emotional and functional ways humans and animals connect
* Teach that humans are responsible to ensure mutual help, not harm, between humans and animals
* Introduce a common Unitarian Universalist celebration, the Blessing of the Animals, which comes from the Catholic tradition of St. Francis of Assisi
* Present animal/human relationships as an aspect of the interdependent web of life (seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle),” [which as noted in the introduction can be understood as a metaphor for God.]

**6.2: World of Wonder: A Program on the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism for Grades K-1**

**6.2.1:** *Session 8: Life-Giving Plants*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session8>

“Participants will:

* Respond to a story, inspired by the biblical story of Noah’s Ark, which illustrates the abundance and diversity of plant life [as directed by God interacting with Noah’s wife.]
* Learn how to plant seedlings
* Understand a garden as a home for plant abundance and diversity by learning “The Garden Song” and (Faith in Action) engaging with a shared, harvestable garden at the congregation or in the local community
* Connect physically with the experience of a seed growing into a flower, through an embodiment exercise.”

**6.3: Creating Home: A Program on Developing a Sense of Home Grounded in Faith for Grades K-1**

**6.3.1:** *Session 15: Muhammad*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session15>

“This session will:

* Introduce children to the life of Muhammad, the Muslim prophet of God
* Explore feelings, both positive and negative, that can be evoked by your faith home
* Make connections between some values and experiences children find at their Unitarian Universalist faith home and some values and experiences that can be found in Islam
* Offer children an inward journey, using guided meditation and a labyrinth
* Provide an experience for children of gaining insights from one of the Unitarian Universalist sources, the world’s religions”

**6.4: Love Surrounds Us: A Program on the UU Principles and Beloved Community for Grades K-1**

**6.4.1:** *Session 2: Love Surrounds Us Sharing*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/session2>

“This session will:

* Introduce the first Principle, “We believe each and every person is important”
* Connect the first Principle to specific words and actions that are respectful
* Link first Principle to the Beatitudes from Christian scripture.”

**6.5: Toolbox of Faith: A Program That Helps Children Discover the Uses of Faith for Grades 4-5**

**6.5.1:** *Session 5: Reflection (Mirror)*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox/session5>

“Participants will:

* Explore the physical qualities of a mirror and use the symbol of a mirror as a way to think about inward reflection
* Learn about the place of inward reflection in their own lives and Unitarian Universalist faith
* Learn the story of the “still, small voice” heard by the prophet Elijah in Hebrew scripture, [and the presence/role of God]
* Experience the properties of a mirror through active games
* Create a personal symbol of reflection to remind them to listen to the still, small voice inside themselves
* Experience moments of reflection and respond to their own reflections by drawing”

**6.6: Amazing Grace: A Program about Exploring Right and Wrong for Grade 6**

**6.6.1:** *Session 6: The First U*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/grace/session6>

“The session begins with a basic tenet of early Unitarianism, the oneness of God and considers some historical consequences of holding that belief and of human actions in general. Then the session explores the consequences of wrong actions, paving the way for discussing Universalism’s ideas about salvation in Session 7.”

**6.6.2:** *Session 10: Right and Wrong Together*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/grace/session10>

“This session will:

* Provide examples of the ever-changing nature of life and matter
* Present examples of the sometimes-complex relationship between right and wrong
* Explore ways that circumstance, detail, and perception affect ideas of right and wrong
* Expose youth to meditation
* Ask youth to design new gods for the modern age.”

**6.7: Riddle and Middle: A Program on the Big Questions for Grade 6**

**6.7.1:** *Session 4: Thinking of God*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session4>

“This session will:

* Pose a big question and explore UU responses to it: Does God exist?
* Offer spiritual thoughts from young UUs
* Familiarize youth with theological terms and ideas
* Reassure youth that independent thought and doubt are acceptable
* Present Unitarian Universalism as a tent in which people of diverse God beliefs gather
* Help youth explore and develop their own God beliefs.”

**6.8: Miracles: A Multigenerational Program on Living in Awe and Wonder**

**6.8.1:** *Session 1: Naming Miracles*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-1>

“This session will:

* Help participants explore what they think constitutes a miracle.
* Illustrate the subjective nature of miracles by sharing creation stories.”

**6.9: Wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures: A Multigenerational Program**

**6.9.1:** *Workshop 1: David and Goliath*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop1>

“This workshop will:

* Present the story the story of David, who was supported by God, and Goliath and invite participants to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the story
* Invite participants to reflect on their own experiences with fear and courage

**6.9.2:** *Workshop 2: David and Nathan - You are That Man*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop2>

“Participants will:

* Gain knowledge and understanding of the actions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters in the Nathan’s parable
* Recall their personal experiences with injustice and greed using a variety of approaches
* Reflect on the experience of being a prophet and taking a stance in support of what is just and fair
* Consider the role of God in this story and compare it with the role of God in the previous workshop #1 [of David and Goliath].
* Experience connection with people of all ages and be enriched by variety of different perspectives offered.”

**6.9.3:** *Workshop 3: Manna in the Wilderness*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop3>

“This workshop will:

* Present the story of God providing the Hebrews with manna to eat while they were in the wilderness
* Engage participants with the experience of the Hebrews by remembering their own experiences of hunger and complaint and by exploring the process of making bread from grain
* Invite participants to reflect on the reason for inclusion of the story in the Hebrew scriptures.”

**6.9.4:** *Workshop 4: The Battle of Jericho*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop4>

“The workshop asks participants to consider why a story like this is included in the Bible. Key questions include: What was the purpose of this narrative in the minds of those who first recorded it? What would it mean if this story were true? What would it mean if this story were false? What do we learn about God—or about people’s perceptions of God—from this story? What insight and wisdom does it offer us today? What are examples in modern times of God depicted as a mighty battle God, bringing victory to those he favors and justifying war?”

**6.9.5:** *Workshop 5: Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop5>

“This workshop invites participants of all ages to explore these key questions: From whose point of view is this story told? Why are the ancestors—and God—depicted in this way? Why would a people not tell a more triumphant and uplifting tale of their founding?

“In the ambiguity and complexity is the wonder of this tale. The text invites us to examine a story from multiple perspectives and to pay attention to the moral critique carried in this ancient founding story of the Hebrew people. The story also tells us that God chooses people who are on the social margins to carry his story—nomads Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, who is a slave.”

**6.9.6:***Workshop 6: The Binding of Isaac*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop6>

“In the story of the binding of Isaac, God instructs Abraham to offer his beloved son as a burnt offering. The meaning and wisdom of this disturbing text has been debated for many centuries. Is this a test of faith for Abraham, in which Abraham demonstrates obedience even to the point of sacrificing his own son? Is this a story that shows that God disapproves of child sacrifice, a practice by many groups in Abraham’s time? Is this a story which depicts God as engaging in a monstrous test, a test which renders such a God unworthy of worship? Is this a story that critiques patriarchal culture, where women and children were possessions of their husbands and fathers? Why was such a story preserved in the scriptural tradition? Unlike some other disturbing stories in the Hebrew scriptures, why does this one remain current and well-known in the popular religious culture of three religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?”

**6.9.7:** *Workshop 8: Creation*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/hebrewscriptures/workshop8>

“This workshop invites participants to appreciate the power and wisdom of this ancient creation story rather than deconstruct it in the light of scientific understandings of evolution. It asks: Who is the God that appears in this story, and how is God different from the God in other stories we have explored? What does it mean if we are all related? What wisdom is there for Unitarian Universalists in honoring Sabbath?”

**Resources for Youth & Adults**

**7.0: Reflections, Readings, Stories & Poetry**

**7.1:** *God* by Rumi

When His light shines — without a veil — neither the sky remains nor the earth, not the sun, nor the moon.  
 God embraces all…there is nothing that is not a part of him already.

Remember God! His remembrance is the strength in the wings of the bird that is your soul

The souls of all friends of God are connected with one another

You must seek anything that you wish to find  
 Not so with the Friend…  
 You begin to seek after you find him

Source:<https://onbeing.org/poetry/god/>

**7.2:** *Your Deepest Identity* by James Martin (131 words)

“Everyone has a vocation. I mean, the most fundamental vocation is to become the person whom God created. And it’s both the person you already are, and the person that God calls you to be. And I think we find that out through our desires. What moves us? What touches us? What are we drawn to? Part of that’s career, but only part of it. I mean, it’s really who you are called to be, and that’s why that question really spoke to me. But yeah, there’s a popular misconception that having a quote/unquote “vocation” means that you have to be a priest or a sister or a brother. But a vocation is your deepest identity, and as well, being called to married life, or being a lawyer, or a teacher.”

Source: <https://onbeing.org/programs/james-martin-finding-god-in-all-things-2/>

**7.3:** *The Mind of God* by Stephen Hawking (107 words)

One could define God as the embodiment of the laws of nature. However, this is not what most people would think of as God. They mean a human-like being, with whom one can have a personal relationship. When you look at the vast size of the universe, and how insignificant and accidental human life is in it, that seems most implausible.

I use the word “God” in an impersonal sense, like Einstein did, for the laws of nature, so knowing the mind of God is knowing the laws of nature. My prediction is that we will know the mind of God by the end of this century.

Source: <https://www.brainpickings.org/?s=God>

**7.4:** *The God Debate* by Nathan Schneider (204 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

What are we really talking about when we debate the existence of God? I think it can become a shortcut, a way of side-stepping more necessary and more difficult questions. Denouncing others as atheists, or as believers in a false God, can become an excuse to treat them as less than human, as undeserving of real consideration. When terrorists attack in the name of a certain God, it can seem easier to blame their religion than to consider their stated grievances about foreign military bases in their countries and foreigners backing their corrupt leaders. When religious communities reject scientific theories for bad reasons, it can seem easier to blame the fact that they believe in God, rather than to notice that other believers might accept the same theories for good reasons. Good ideas and bad ideas, good actions and bad actions – they’re all on either side of the God divide.

… I believe in God, but I often find more common cause with those who say they don’t than those who say they do. I’ve come to care less whether anyone says they believe in God or not, and to care more about what they mean by that, and what they do about it.

Source: <https://aeon.co/ideas/how-much-does-it-matter-whether-god-exists>

**7.5:** *Godless Yet Good* by Troy Jollimore (266 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

In polls and studies, a majority of Americans don’t trust atheists and say they would not vote for a presidential candidate who did not believe in God. “Religion” and “theology” are still frequently cited in the American media as if they were the sole aspects of human existence responsible for matters of value. “We need science to tell us the way things are; we need religion to tell us the way things ought to be,” as people around here like to say.

…The fact that ethical commitments, in some people’s lives, find a natural place in the context of religion does not imply that such commitments can only be grounded and motivated in religion, nor that a universe can only contain morality if it also contains God.

…A secular ethics that emphasizes the significance of self-cultivation, individual judgment, and emotions such as compassion, as well as recognizing the usefulness of moral exemplars—teachers who are paradigms of wisdom, who inspire us and whom we can try to imitate …is a secular ethics that shares some important common ground with religious tradition. The idea that morality stems from strong character rather than from obedience to a strict set of rules, for instance, is very much in line with the moral reorientation proposed by Christ in the New Testament, from a view centered on obedience to God’s commandments to one in which love and compassion take center stage.

… Morality can get along just fine without God. But it cannot possibly get by if it neglects and ignores the very things that make human life meaningful and precious.

Source: <https://aeon.co/essays/rules-and-reasons-are-not-enough-for-an-ethics-without-god>

**7.6:** *Einstein’s God Does Not Play Dice* by Jim Baggott (387 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

“The theory [of quantum mechanics] produces a good deal but hardly brings us closer to the secret of the Old One,” wrote Albert Einstein in December 1926. “I am at all events convinced that He [i.e., God] does not play dice.”

[Still,] the …12-year-old Einstein …[had] developed a deep aversion to the dogma of organized religion that would last for his lifetime, an aversion that extended to all forms of authoritarianism, including any kind of dogmatic atheism.

…Einstein evolved a much more realist position. He preferred to accept the content of a scientific theory realistically, as a contingently “true” representation of an objective physical reality. And, although he wanted no part of religion, the belief in God that he had carried with him from his brief flirtation with Judaism became the foundation on which he constructed his philosophy. When asked about the basis for his realist stance, he explained: “I have no better expression than the term “religious” for this trust in the rational character of reality and in its being accessible, at least to some extent, to human reason.”

…But Einstein’s was a God of philosophy, not religion. When asked many years later whether he believed in God, he replied: ‘I believe in Spinoza’s God, who reveals himself in the lawful harmony of all that exists, but not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind.’ Baruch Spinoza, a contemporary of Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz, had conceived of God as identical with nature. For this, he was considered a dangerous heretic, and was excommunicated from the Jewish community in Amsterdam.

Einstein’s God is infinitely superior but impersonal and intangible, subtle but not malicious. He is also firmly determinist. As far as Einstein was concerned, God’s “lawful harmony” is established throughout the cosmos by strict adherence to the physical principles of cause and effect. Thus, there is no room in Einstein’s philosophy for free will: “Everything is determined, the beginning as well as the end, by forces over which we have no control … we all dance to a mysterious tune, intoned in the distance by an invisible player.”

…In February 1954, just 14 months before he died, he wrote in a letter to the American physicist David Bohm: ‘If God created the world, his primary concern was certainly not to make its understanding easy for us.”

Source: <https://aeon.co/ideas/what-einstein-meant-by-god-does-not-play-dice>

**7.7:** *Finding God* by James Martin (199 words)

…The idea is that God is not simply to be found in our prayer life, which is very important, or in worship services and Mass or in reading the Bible. All those are important and at the center of that kind of spirituality. But in your daily life, in your relationships, in your work, in the emotions that come up, in those moments that you see a sunset and you say, “My gosh that’s so beautiful. Why am I feeling like this?” Or you see an infant for the first time, like your niece or your nephew or your son or your daughter or granddaughter or grandson, and you say, “My gosh, where are these feelings coming from?” And these are ways that God has of communicating with us through our daily lives in all things.

And then the second way we look at it is being a contemplative in action. ...We’re out in the world. And yet we have that contemplative stance towards everything, so that every moment is an invitation to encounter the living God who wants to encounter us. So, it’s a beautiful spirituality. It’s very kind of spacious, and it fits people, and it’s user-friendly.

Source: <https://onbeing.org/programs/james-martin-finding-god-in-all-things-2/>

**7.8:** *Can God Lie?* by Dallas G. Denery II (312 words) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

“Can God lie?” proved an important question for more than 1,000 years because it compelled theologians to consider in the starkest terms the nature of God’s relationship to the world. …There were two distinct approaches to understanding God’s involvement with the world and they suggested very different conceptions about God.

On the one hand, people could look to the narrative of scripture for clues. Scripture reveals a God who acts and reacts to events in the world…. On the other hand, people could think about God in more philosophically inflected terms…. Omnipotent and perfect, this philosophically conceived God existed at a distance, aloof from his creation, unchanging and immutable. A perfect being, after all, lacks for nothing and, lacking nothing, never needs to do anything.

…Far from being a mere curiosity of the past, concerns about God’s deceptions proved central to the Scientific Revolution and therefore to the modern world. Most of the great 17th century scientists [aka natural philosophers] … wrote about God and incorporated God into their theories, not as a mere concession to authorities, but as central to their conceptions of the universe.

…The commitment of the Scientific Revolution to rational causes for all events, even exceptional or seemingly anomalous ones, robbed God of the power to deceive. …God became the source of universal order at the cost of no longer having anything much to do with the universe.

…Seventeenth century natural philosophers needed to prohibit the very possibility of divine deception and this prohibition is a forgotten source of the gap that today exists between science and religion. They all believed that God was both their salvation and the master craftsman of the amazing cosmos. Beyond that, they needed God to be silent because only in silence could they find the truths they sought. Finding those truths, it became necessary to believe there had never been anything else but silence.

Source: <https://aeon.co/essays/how-the-scientific-revolution-made-an-honest-man-of-god>

**7.9:** *Torch, Bucket of Water, or Beauty?* by Barbara Brown (122 words)

An old story is told about Rabia of Basra, an eighth-century Sufi mystic who was seen running through the streets of her city one day carrying a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. When someone asked her what she was doing, she said she wanted to burn down the rewards of paradise with the torch and put out the fires of hell with the water, because both blocked the way to God. “O, Allah,” Rabia prayed, “if I worship You for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship You in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise. But if I worship You for Your Own sake, grudge me not Your everlasting Beauty.”

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2403>

**7.10:** *Radical Amazement* by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (268 words)

The surest way to suppress our ability to understand the meaning of God …is to take things for granted. Indifference to the sublime wonder of living is the root of sin. Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious [person’s] …attitude toward history and nature. One attitude is alien to …[this] spirit: taking things for granted, regarding events as a natural course of things. To find an approximate cause of a phenomenon is no answer to …ultimate wonder.

…As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. [We] …will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder.

Awareness of the divine begins with wonder.

…Radical amazement …refers to all of reality; not only to what we see, but also to the very act of seeing as well as to our own selves, to the selves that see and are amazed at their ability to see.  
 The grandeur or mystery of being is not a particular puzzle to the mind, as, for example, the cause of volcanic eruptions. We do not have to go to the end of reasoning to encounter it. Grandeur or mystery is something with which we are confronted everywhere and at all times.

…Does not mystery reign within reasoning, within perception, within explanation? What formula could explain and solve the enigma of the very fact of thinking?

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=1080>

**7.11:** *The Threshold You Are Crossing* by Michael Quattrone (291 words)

Have you tried to think your way into life, or out of it? How has that worked so far? But your merciful heart can forgive you, no matter how long it has been packed away. No matter how many times you denied it, didn’t hear, or pretended not to. That is the heart that brought you here. That is the same generous heart that has opened your life to this moment of choice, this palace of surrender, this precipice of love: your heart that was wild enough to be born into your animal form; your heart that will savage all your false domesticity, and sink its teeth into the flesh of human purpose; the heart that feeds on the blood of life; the heart that gives it back—twofold, tenfold, Godfold—renewed, re-vowed, in the rhythm of the drumbeat that invented time.

This is the choice that is both “now or never” and “now and always.” And all that’s asked of you is to say yes. You must say yes in a way you have not spoken any word before. In a way that breaks both language and silence. Say yes, the oldest prayer to the oldest god; the yes that created everything and holds us still; the yes that only you can say, and only you can hear; the yes that ripples through your body with hunger and pleasure and fear; the yes that will echo, and give you no rest, and will restore you beyond measure; the yes your soul has already spoken; the song that has already moved you; the yes of the name you are given at the gates of heaven, for that is where I am meeting you now.

That is the threshold you are crossing.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=1056>

**7.12:** *Staying in Your Own Business* by Byron Katie (208 words)

I can find only three kinds of business in the universe: mine, yours, and God’s. For me, the word God means “reality.” Reality is God, because it rules. Anything that’s out of my control, your control, and everyone else’s control—I call that God’s business.

Much of our stress comes from mentally living out of our own business. …If I am mentally in your business or in God’s business, the effect is separation.

…If you are living your life and I am mentally living your life, who is here living mine? …I am separate from myself, wondering why my life doesn’t work. To think that I know what’s best for anyone else is to be out of my business. Even in the name of love, it is pure arrogance, and the result is tension, anxiety, and fear.

…The next time you’re feeling stress or discomfort, ask yourself whose business you’re in mentally, and you may burst out laughing! That question can bring you back to yourself. And you may come to see that you’ve never really been present, that you’ve been mentally living in other people’s business all your life. Just to notice that you’re in someone else’s business can bring you back to your own wonderful self.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=997>

**7.13:** *Is the Universe Friendly?* by Albert Einstein (202 words)

I think the most important question facing humanity is, ‘Is the universe a friendly place?’ This is the first and most basic question all people must answer for themselves.

For if we decide that the universe is an unfriendly place, then we will use our technology, our scientific discoveries and our natural resources to achieve safety and power by creating bigger walls to keep out the unfriendliness and bigger weapons to destroy all that which is unfriendly and I believe that we are getting to a place where technology is powerful enough that we may either completely isolate or destroy ourselves as well in this process.

If we decide that the universe is neither friendly nor unfriendly and that God is essentially “playing dice with the universe,” then we are simply victims to the random toss of the dice and our lives have no real purpose or meaning.

But if we decide that the universe is a friendly place, then we will use our technology, our scientific discoveries and our natural resources to create tools and models for understanding that universe. Because power and safety will come through understanding its workings and its motives.

God does not play dice with the universe.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=797>

**7.14:***Song of the Soul* by Kahlil Gibran (251 words)

In the depth of my soul there is

A wordless song – a song that lives

In the seed of my heart.

It refuses to melt with ink on

Parchment; it engulfs my affection

In a transparent cloak and flows,

But not upon my lips.

How can I sing it? I fear it may

Mingle with earthly ether;

To whom shall I sing it? It dwells

In the house of my soul, in fear of

Harsh ears.

When I look into my inner eyes

I see the shadow of its shadow;

When I touch my fingertips

I feel its vibrations.

The deeds of my hands heed its

Presence as a lake must reflect

The glittering stars;

My tears reveal it, as bright drops of dew

Reveal the secret of a withering rose.

It is a song composed by contemplation,

And published by silence,

And shunned by clamor,

And folded by truth,

And repeated by dreams,

And understood by love,

And hidden by awakening,

And sung by the soul.

It is the song of love;

What Cain or Esau could sing it?

It is more fragrant than jasmine;

What voice could enslave it?

It is heartbound, as a virgin’s secret;

What string could quiver it?

Who dares unite the roar of the sea

And the singing of the nightingale?

Who dares compare the shrieking tempest

To the sigh of an infant?

Who dares speak aloud the words

Intended for the heart to speak?

What human dares sing in voice

The song of God?

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=794>

**7.15:** *The Murmur of the Sea* by Kent Nerburn (265 words)

We are all born with a belief in God. It may not have a name or a face. We may not even see it as God. But it is there.

It is the sense that comes over us as we stare into the starlit sky or watch the last fiery rays of an evening sunset. It is the morning shiver as we wake on a beautiful day and smell a richness in the air that we know and love from somewhere we can’t quite recall. It is the mystery behind the beginning of time and beyond the limits of space. It is a sense of otherness that brings alive something deep in our hearts.

Some people will tell you that there is no God.

…You cannot argue with these people, nor should you. …The Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu …said, “A frog in a well cannot be talked to about the sea.”

If you have any sense of the mystery of the universe around you, you are hearing the murmur of the sea. Your task is to leave the well, to step out into the sun, and to set out for the sea.

…If you hear the call of the distant sea, do not be turned away by the naivetés and contradictions of the beliefs around you. There are many paths, and the sea looks different from each of them. Your task is not to judge the paths of others, but to find a path that will lead you ever closer to the murmurings that you hear in your heart.

Begin by accepting where you are.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=717>

**7.16:** *Power of Blessing* by Rachel Naomi Remen (256 words)

We bless the life around us far more than we realize. Many simple, ordinary things that we do can affect those around us in profound ways: the unexpected phone call, the brief touch, the willingness to listen generously, the warm smile or wink of recognition. We can even bless total strangers and be blessed by them. Big messages come in small packages. All it may take to restore someone’s trust in life may be returning a lost earring or a dropped glove.

A woman once told me that she did not feel the need to reach out to those around her because she prayed every day. Surely, this was enough. But a prayer is about our relationship to God; a blessing is about our relationship to the spark of God in one another. God may not need our attention as badly as the person next to us on the bus or behind us on line in the supermarket. Everyone in the world matters, and so do their blessings. When we bless others, we offer them refuge from an indifferent world.

The capacity to bless life is in everybody. The power of our blessing is not diminished by illness or age. On the contrary, our blessings become even more powerful as we grow older. They have survived the buffeting of our experience. …I first learned to do this from people who were dying, people who had moved into a more authentic relationship with those around them because only that which is genuine still had meaning for them.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=528>

**7.17:** *Counting on Our Ultimate Concern* by Sharon Salzberg (231 words)

(Note: Paul Tillich equated ultimate concern with the concept of God)

…As we come to deeply know the underlying truths of who we are and what our lives are about, abiding faith, or unwavering faith as it is traditionally called, arises.

Abiding faith does not depend on borrowed concepts. Rather, it is the magnetic force of a bone-deep, lived understanding, one that draws us to realize our ideals, walk our talk, and act in accord with what we know to be true. Theologian Paul Tillich defines faith as alignment with our “ultimate concern,” those values that we are most devoted to, that form the core of what we care passionately about. An ultimate concern is not an interest that is merely a fashion or a whim, but one that is a centering point for our lives.

When we wake up in the morning and picture the dealings of our day as consequential, we tell ourselves a story that is based on our ultimate concern. We remind ourselves of loving our neighbor or remembering God.

…Our ultimate concern is the touchstone we turn to over and over again, the thread that we reach for to convey a sense of meaning in our lives. It is the glue that connects the disparate pieces, the frame that gives shape to the picture of our experiences. We turn to our ultimate concern when afraid, or bewildered, or when we don’t quite know who we are anymore.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=518>

**7.18:** *Radical Response* by [M. Scott Peck](http://www.awakin.org/read/index.php?op=author&sel=M.+Scott+Peck) (171 words)

Although not wholly adequate, Matthew Fox’s definition of prayer is still my favorite. It is a definition that doesn’t even use the word “God.” Fox defines it as “a radical response to the mysteries of life.”

Three things make this definition so meaningful to me. The first is the word ‘radical’, which comes from the Latin “radix,” for “root.” It implies that prayer requires that we get at the root of things without being distracted by superficialities. We must think deeply about our lives, which, of course, takes time. It is a contemplative definition.

The second is the word response. It implies that through prayer we must not only think deeply but also translate our thinking into action. We need to behave out of deep thoughtfulness.

Finally, it implies that life is an inherently mysterious business and that there are no easy answers or simple formulas. Even those answers we arrive at through our best thinking will not necessarily be crystal-clear ones that relieve us from the burden of taking risks.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=322>

**7.19:** *God and We Evolve* by Deepak Chopra (270 words)

God evolves. That’s why he keeps speaking and never grows silent. The very basic fact that God has shifted between ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘it,’ and none of the above shows how changeable the divine presence is. But to say that God evolves implies that he began in an immature state and then grew into fullness, when every faith holds that God is infinite to begin with. What actually evolved was human understanding. For thousands of years, perhaps as far back as cave dwellers, the human mind held a capacity for higher reality. Sacred paintings and statues are as ancient as civilization, preceding written language and probably even agriculture.

Nearness to God is a constant, not just in human history, but in human nature. If we are connected to our souls, the connection is permanent, even if our attention falters. We think that God changes, because our own perception waxes and wanes. The messages keep coming, though, and God keeps showing different faces. Sometimes the whole notion of the divine gets hidden, when secular forces snatch the steering wheel and attempt to drive alone. But the force of spirituality never fully surrenders. God stands for our need to know ourselves, and as awareness evolves, so does God. This journey never ends. At this moment somewhere in the world a person is waking up in the middle of the night hearing a message that feels uncanny, as if arriving from another reality. Actually, there must be many such visitations every night, and the people who step forth to announce what they’ve heard form a motley crew of crazies, artists, avatars, rebels, and saints.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/23984>

**7.20:** *Making Every Day a Prayer* by Kathy Coffey (249 words)

The troubles with prayer are multiple…. Prayer resists being turned off and on…. It cannot be regimented or legislated…. Nor can it be a desperate human effort to placate or motivate an angry, distant deity.

Many people who have thought long and hard about prayer …suggest solutions to all the problems mentioned. For them, prayer seems unselfconscious, a matter of sinking into God, becoming one with God. Poet Jessica Powers describes this “disappearing act” into God: “I walked out of myself and into the woods of God’s mercy and there I abide.”

People who repeatedly try to be at one with God, to discover again and again their union with their maker, find that no matter what happens, they can go through it with grace. Their prayer seems to be a constant immersion, a burning awareness that what’s human is holy and that what seems insignificant is bathed in divinity. Their prayer is a deliberate movement to the quiet pool of the inner self where I meet the God who is lover-creator-friend. The French phrase *je me souviens* means “I remember,” but more literally, “I return to myself,” and in so doing, to the source of my life. Such prayer can be all-pervasive, a persistent habit of finding God’s presence everywhere.

Can we really pray everywhere? Even in the emergency room? the retirement center? the jail? the bar? the traffic jam?

That legitimate question deserves a clear answer. …God is in everything, no matter how odd the setting seems.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/13439>

**7.21:** *God Lives* by [James Kavanaugh](https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/search?author_first=James&author_last=Kavanaugh) (194 words)

Kavanaugh (1928-2009), a former Catholic priest wrote an important poem, *My Easy God is Gone*. It was included in his 1970 book of poetry, *There Are Men Too Gentle to Live Among Wolves.* See <http://churchgoingagnostic.blogspot.com/2008/10/reflection-on-easy-god-is-gone-poem-by.html>

My God is not dead, the whole world speaks of [God]…. The Blacks’ struggle for freedom is the relentless voice of God. Once the Black[s] knew another kind of God and was content to sing mournful hymns and to hang …[their heads]. Once …[they] prayed to a white God Who told …[them] to tolerate …slavery and bow to …[their] master in a timid and broken spirit. Now I see the wrath of the true and living God Who marched in Washington and raged in Detroit or Los Angeles. I see that God Lives in …black …[people’s] determination to work and eat and send …[their] children to a decent school. I see God in the fire of dark eyes and in the courage of a strong mouth with full lips. I see that God Lives in slums and speeches, in the fight for open housing, in the courage and fire of the gays for their true dignity, and in the strength of brave men and women who are ready to go to jail rather than be denied their human rights. I see the living God because all [hu]mankind is demanding a meaningful life and total respect in place of slavery and hostile judgment.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/22189>

**7.22:** *Pictures of God* by Lauren Winner (259 words)

On some days, I know instinctively that God is closer to me than my nearest neighbor. On other days, God seems distant and inscrutable, but some days God is neighborly, and close at hand. One fine morning I see a jackdaw out my window on the branch of the tree, and for a week or so I think about how God is like a bird. And sometimes I fear God, and sometimes I don’t give God a passing glance, and then I feel I should think about God more.

Sometimes, a hymn gets caught in my hair, and I sing it all week long, off and on, without ever thinking hard about what it says about God.

Some days God feels like an abyss. Some days God feels like the father I always wanted, and some days God seems like the father I actually have. Some days I know that God is whatever gives me solace, and wherever I abide. On some days, maybe many days, I don’t picture God at all.

If you, like me, picture God in lots of different ways, or if sometimes God seems easy to speak about, and on some days you have no words for God, and sometimes you feel that there are too many words for God, so many that the abundance stumps you—if that is the case, then you are pretty much right in line with how the Bible invites us to imagine God: in some very singular ways; in dizzyingly hundreds of ways; sometimes, in no way at all.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/27806>

**7.23:** *Got Faith?* by Niles Elliot Goldstein (155 words)

Faith involves risk, for it is rooted in the conflict between the boundless passion of the believer and the stark wall of objective uncertainty. Faith begins where thought ends. Since the object of faith is an absolute paradox, faith is an offense to the mind, an affront to our yearning for intellectual apprehension. Faith must be an act of the will, the product not of rational demonstration, but of an existential ‘leap’ toward the unknown. Kierkegaard argues that faith needs room to ‘venture,’ to make the passionate, nonrational leap whereby the individual comes to believe. This room derives from uncertainty, which, paradoxically, ‘tortures forth the passionate certainty of faith’ in God. But faith is not a permanent state, a comfortable and sustained place of rest. It is a constant and painful struggle, a battle, the ultimate tension. Faith must be renewed continually, over and over, like the actions of the figures who leap for heaven….

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/15027>

**7.24:** *Will You Open the Door of Your Heart?* by Mirabai Starr (373 words)

Late at night, you think you hear a knocking at the door of your heart. You peer out the window into the darkness, clutch the folds of your robe. Maybe you imagined it. You begin to head back to bed when the knocking comes again, more urgent now.

“Excuse me?” a voice calls. “I’m a little lost. And hungry.”

You hesitate for a moment longer, measuring habitual caution against an irrational surge of fearlessness. The scales tip and you throw open your heart-door to greet the stranger there.

“Welcome home,” you say.

Only then do you recognize her face. It is God! And she looks exactly like you.

Then there are the nights when you bolt the door of your heart, stuff wads of silicone in your ears and pop a pill so that nothing can reach you. You would like to be available, but your days are long and your cupboards are bare. You aspire to make each act an offering to the Divine, yet sometimes it is all you can do to take out the garbage without bursting into tears. You wish you could see the face of God in everyone always, but your eyes are clouded by longing and disappointment.

Besides, the Holy One has a tendency to hide behind preposterous disguises: he is the homeless man lumbering through the park talking to himself in a loud voice, a pint of Cuervo Gold tucked into the back pocket of his jeans; she is the teenager texting her boyfriend and applying mascara at the stoplight after it has turned green; he is the young father gambling away his children’s dinner at the Indian casino on his way home from another day at the sewage treatment plant; she is the elderly woman slowly counting out change at the convenience store when you are late for a job interview; and he is the Very Busy Man who does not give you the job.

You understand that this is why all the sacred teachings remind us to be vigilant: God could pop up anywhere, anytime, and drop his mask. When he [or she] does, we must be sure we have treated him [or her] like God, no matter how he [or she] was behaving.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/22708>

**7.25:** *No Choice in the Matter* by Desmond Tutu (263 words)

People of religion have no choice in the matter. Where there is injustice and oppression, where people are treated as if they were less than who they are—those created in the image of God—you have no choice but to oppose, and oppose vehemently and oppose with all the force that you have in your being, that injustice and oppression. …If you are a believer you must oppose injustice, whether you are a Muslim, …a Christian, …a Hindu or a Buddhist, because …not one of them has a low doctrine of human beings.

Christianity says human beings are created in the image of God; so does Judaism. Islam says you are the *abd*, the slave, of God whose purpose is to place your will in subjection to the will of Allah. And it says therefore that you are someone who can be in relationship with God. So, each of these religions in its intrinsic nature compels its adherents to be people who strive for justice and for peace and for goodness. If you do not, in the face of injustice, stand up and oppose it, then every night you must confess and say, “God, I have sinned, because I have disobeyed a fundamental law of our relationship.”

We do our religions scant justice, we put our religions into disrepute, if we do not stand up for the truth, if we do not stand up for justice, if we are not the voice of the voiceless ones, if we are not those who stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/21105>

**7.26:** *Envisioning God in New Ways* by Kirk Byron Jones (190 words)

What does seeing God as a jazz musician and as a body of water have to do with purpose? By envisioning God in such creative and open ways rather than as a God who judges and rules, we develop a creatively open disposition. We develop an inclination toward life that is broader, wider, and grander. We develop an unconscious distaste and suspicion for narrowness of any sort, including the kind that afflicts much of our thinking about life’s vocation and purpose.

Begin today envisioning God in new and imaginative ways. Breaking open your understandings of God will have the effect of breaking open your understanding of life and your life’s dreams and purposes. Become more creatively free in interpreting divinity frees you to think about life’s possibilities in new and exciting ways. The hallelujah ripple effect of thinking about God expansively is that you can begin to conceptualize your aspirations in ever-expanding new ways.

…Heavy, domineering notions of God cause us to have burdensome perceptions of life.

…Changing your belief about God will light your imagination, causing you to see possibilities and prospects for your life you never imagined before.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/16817>

**7.27:** *The Value of Doubt to Faith* by Irma Zaleski (263 words)

I once met a Korean Zen master who, after I had asked him some question I no longer remember, wagged his finger at me and said: “Thinking, thinking, thinking! Checking, checking, checking! No good! No good! *Don’t know! Don’t know! Don’t I know!*—That is your answer!” I don’t think I really understood then what the master meant, but I never forgot him or his “answer.” There was a joy in that meeting, a lightness of heart….

It was only years later …that I was able to understand his words better, and to recognize how relevant they were for the …way to God.

I realized that we should never attempt to solve our doubts in matters of faith by rational arguments or inner debates.

…We must face our doubts, acknowledge them and simply let go of them. We shout “Don’t know!” …as a sign of our assurance that Truth is immeasurably bigger than all our thinking and checking….

If …we *practice* “not-knowing,” doubt …may yet prove to be not an enemy of our faith, but its ally and friend. Struggle with doubt may help us to understand ever more clearly the limits of thought…: a powerful means of the “unknowing” that is the heart of faith.

There is no greater danger to faith, to wisdom and to love than the presumption that we know it all: that we have understood it all, that there is nothing more to discover or learn. Doubt makes it very difficult for us to fall into such a presumption. It forces us to recognize how little we know.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18663>

**7.28:** *Other Religions as Sources of Wisdom* by J. Philip Wogaman (955 words)

…I offer here a …summary of … what we can learn from other religions and not just what we can learn about those religions.

1. We must not compare the best of our own faith to the worst in others. Christians should not dismiss the jihad of Muslims as violent conquest while considering Christian Crusades as nonviolent campaigns for some good objective—and vice versa.
2. The Christian view of Christ as the way to God can be interpreted through the love of Christ as a manifestation of the love of God, so that love — not exclusive adherence to Christianity — is the way to God. That love is also to be found in other religions.
3. It is possible to remain committed to one’s own faith and still learn from others.
4. If “religion” means the beliefs and values that are central or ultimate in our lives, then religion comes in many cultural forms, including those that have no place for God.
5. The term “revelation” refers to aspects of experience that bring all of life into focus.
6. What we worship is central to who we are. (Judaism)
7. The material universe and human history are to be affirmed. (Judaism, Islam)
8. To be “chosen” by God is to be charged with special responsibility; it is not an exclusive privilege. (Judaism)
9. Tradition is indispensable in the transmission of faith from one generation to the next, and myth is an important way of conveying truth. (Judaism)
10. Ordinary adherents to a faith tradition are often more open than theologians. (Islam and others)
11. It is important to accept the value of other religions. (Emphasized by several religions)
12. The monotheism of Christian faith needs greater clarity. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be understood as three different gods, but rather as three ways in which the one God has been experienced.
13. The Muslim view that Muhammad is to be venerated but not worshiped as God can help us see that while we worship the God who is disclosed through Christ, that is not the same as worship of the man Jesus. (Islam)
14. Scientific study should be celebrated, not rejected. (Islam, atheism)
15. Moral and spiritual disciplines are important in spiritual development. (Islam, Asian religions)
16. Nobody has all the answers. The whole of being is beyond human comprehension, even though we all have knowledge of part of it. (Asian religions)
17. God is bigger than any human conception. God encompasses everything, and every aspect of reality gains its significance in relation to God. (Hinduism)
18. We cannot escape responsibilities by retreating into religion. (Hinduism, Buddhism)
19. Spiritual life advances through stages; we cannot become spiritually mature all at once. (Hinduism)
20. Division of labor and of responsibilities is built into the human condition, but those who are among the elite have special responsibility for the weaker and more vulnerable members of society. (Hinduism)
21. Evil, while real, does not have independent existence. (Hinduism)
22. In speaking about God, we must not turn God into an abstraction or an object. (Buddhism, atheism)
23. Religious authority figures and scriptures should not be considered to be beyond question or criticism. (Buddhism, Hinduism, atheism)
24. 24. It is an illusion to think of wealth, fame, and power as permanent. (Buddhism, Hinduism)
25. Much human suffering is the result of inordinate craving. (Buddhism)
26. Compassion is the best expression of our humanity. (Buddhism)
27. All our actions, good and bad, have consequences, or Karma. (Buddhism, Hinduism)
28. God should not be given a limiting name. Human names for God point toward God but cannot express the whole reality of God. (Taoism)
29. Excessive competition, dividing humanity into winners and losers, is a prime source of conflict. We should not put ourselves before others. (Taoism)
30. Even if considered to be necessary, war is always tragic. (Taoism)
31. Rulers should govern quietly, without ostentation, not relying primarily on force. (Taoism, Confucianism)
32. Ceremony, religious and otherwise, has limited value. (Taoism)
33. Civility and courtesy are to be prized in political life. (Confucianism)
34. The natural world has spiritual significance. (Primal religions)
35. All of life is interconnected. (Primal religions)
36. Nonviolence, including respect for nonhuman forms of life, is a transcendently important value. (Jainism)
37. People who convert to other religions should not be ostracized. (Jainism)
38. God is present in each of us. (Sikhism, Hinduism)
39. Women must be valued and treated as equal to men. (Sikhism)
40. Commitment to truth should be as close to absolute as possible. (Zoroastrianism)
41. The oneness and unity of humanity is to be affirmed. (Baha’i)
42. Religion should not be used as a substitute for needed social change. (Marxist atheism)
43. Human work and creativity are an expression of our humanity. The product of our work is not simply an objective commodity. (Marxist atheism)
44. A social ethic should lead to commitment by society to ensure employment opportunity and a living wage for all of its members. (Marxist atheism)
45. The Bible contains self-contradictions that cannot be explained away. (Twenty-first-century atheism)
46. There is a dark side to Christian history and tradition, including depictions of a vengeful God, that cannot be accepted morally. (Twenty-first-century atheism)
47. Religion must not be promulgated by compulsion. (Twenty-first-century atheism)

*Then, these points where others can learn from Christianity:*

1. Grace is prior to law. Unless people feel accepted by God and others, they will be prone to be self-serving.
2. The mainline Christian disciplines of biblical scholarship over the past two centuries can be utilized in other religious traditions. Honest scriptural scholarship enhances religious faith.
3. Twentieth-century mainline Christian ecumenical movements have pioneered disciplines of interdenominational and interfaith relationships from which other religions could learn.”

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/26433>

**8.0: Curriculum & Theme-Based Classroom Activities for Youth & Adults**

***Youth***

**A Tapestry of Faith**

**8.1: A Place of Wholeness: A Program for Youth Exploring Their Own Unitarian Universalist Faith Journeys**

**8.1.1:** *Workshop 7: Reason*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop7>

“Participants will:

* Differentiate between reason and similar processes and faculties
* Learn the importance of reason for Unitarian Universalists and their own lives
* Understand that the use of reason can lead to diverse religious and theological perspectives [including reasoning about the existence of God]
* Reflect on the role of reason in the development of their own beliefs and perspectives
* Know how to use reason in their work for justice”

**8.2: Building Bridges: A World Religions Program for 8th to 9th Grades**

**8.2.1:** *Workshop 11: Christianity 1*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop11>

“Participants will:

* Hear and discuss the life and words of Jesus of Nazareth
* Deepen their understanding of Christian scripture and doctrine
* Understand Pentecost and the founding of the Christian church
* Learn how Christianity fits into religious history.”

**8.2.2:** *Workshop 12: Christianity 2*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop12>

“This workshop will:

* Continue to explore fundamental aspects of Christianity
* Explore the Protestant Reformation and its relationship to the contemporary religious landscape
* Acquaint participants with some of the variety of doctrines in Protestant denominations.”
* [Compare Calvinism with Universalism to draw out significant differences in their view of God.]

**8.2.3:** *Workshop 16: Evangelical Christianity*

**Link:** <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop16>

“This workshop will:

* Introduce fundamental beliefs of contemporary Evangelical Christians, particularly the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and the concept of being born again (saved) through acceptance of Jesus as one’s personal savior
* Describe a range of Evangelical Christian beliefs and practices, and explore the appeal these may hold for adherents
* Highlight a variety of expressions of Evangelical Christianity in our pluralistic society’s cultural and political life, and guide youth to meet these expressions grounded in their own Unitarian Universalist faith.”

***Adults***

**8.3: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope: Who, Me, and Elder? An Adult Program**

**8.3.1:** *Workshop 3: Diving Through the Layers – The Fabric of My Life*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/hindsight/workshop-3>

“Participants will:

* Continue to grow a supportive community
* Consider past negative and positive happenings as meaningful parts of lived experience
* Take part in and learn simple stretching exercises
* Share Life Maps or Lifescapes and claim wisdom from life experience
* Experience guided meditation as a centering technique
* Reflect on past hurts and offer forgiveness.”

**8.4: What Moves Us: A Unitarian Universalist Theology Program for Adults**

The following workshops explore the aspects of God in UU history.

**8.4.1:** *Workshop 1: George de Benneville*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop1>

**8.4.2:** *Workshop 3: Hosea Ballou*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop3>

**8.4.3:** *Workshop 4: William Ellery Channing*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop4>

**8.4.4:** *Workshop 6: Sophia Lyon Fahs*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop6>

**8.4.5:** *Workshop 7: James Luther Adams*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop7>

**8.4.6:** *Workshop 8: Forrest Church*

**Link:** <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/movesus/workshop8>

**8.5: What We Choose: An Adult Program on Ethics for Unitarian Universalists**

These two workshops explore God in terms of moral authority and moral laws.

**8.5.1:** *Workshop 1: The Locus of Moral Authority*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/ethics/workshop1>

**8.5.2:** *Workshop 2: Unchanging Truths*

Link: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/ethics/workshop2>

**9.0: Popular Music**

# 9.1: *Losing My Religion* by REM (4:54)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwtdhWltSIg>

# 9.2: *By the Grace of God* by Katy Perry (4:40)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_K8YscYNoc>

# 9.3: *Wings of an Angel* by Sarah McLachlan (4:33)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SiylvmFI_8>

# 9.4: *Laughing With* by Regina Spektor (3:16)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pxRXP3w-sQ>

# 9.5: *God is a River* by Peter Mayer (4:04)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOZABeqEedI>

# 9.6: *Everything is Holy Now* by Peter Mayer (4:55)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiypaURysz4>

# 9.7: *The Garden* by Peter Mayer (3:46)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iKXFAGRc1w>

# 9.8: *My Soul* by Peter Mayer (4:50)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXxfA3pyZgI>

# 9.9: *The Birthday Party* by Peter Mayer (4:49)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RFxobxa5oE>

# 9.10: *Church of the Earth* by Peter Mayer (5:00)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SDiFxcLmDs>

# 9.11: *My Sweet Lord* by George Harrison (4:49)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qJTJNfzvr8>

# 9.12: *River of Dreams* by Billy Joel (4:09)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSq4B_zHqPM>

# 9.13: *Loves Me Like a Rock* by Paul Simon (3:18)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9i3JXGtC_os>

# 9.14: *Jesus Take the Wheel* by Carrie Underwood (3:44)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lydBPm2KRaU>

# 9.15: *You Found Me* by The Fray (4:01)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMlou7Q0GRE>

# 9.16: *What If God Was One of Us* by Joan Osbourne (5:01)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRsjHjZyask>

# 9.17: *Day by Day* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:11)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Hhb9jZtbko&list=PLCFF614F931D3493C&index=4>

# 9.18: *Prepare Ye* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (2:11)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFAHBtJqghc&list=PLCFF614F931D3493C&index=2>

# 9.19: *Save the People* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:38)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1CnSnNL-PQ&list=PLCFF614F931D3493C&index=3>

# 9.20: *Bless the Lord* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:38)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MG3wP349nuI&list=PLCFF614F931D3493C&index=6>

# 9.21: *All Good Gifts* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:27)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nlagfh5eFP4&list=PLCFF614F931D3493C&index=8>

# 9.22: *By My Side* by the Godspell New Broadway Cast (3:40)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdrD4fXgIM8&list=PLCFF614F931D3493C&index=12>

# 9.23: *American Jesus* by Bad Religion (3:17)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvCKz9SNQX0>

# 9.24: *All in It* by Justin Bieber (3:46)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LywsBrVSY6M>

# 9.25: *Nobody* by Selena Gomez (3:42)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvApwNq6A0E>

# 9.26: *Dear God* by Nick Jonas (3:53)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajla3DV9tCs>

# 9.27: *God is a DJ* by Pink (1:50)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWFShtdhy0s>

# 9.28: *You Raise Me Up* by Josh Groban (4:59)

# Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oni0tO_HN30>

# 9.29: *Pocketful of Sunshine* of Natasha Bedingfield (3:00)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gte3BoXKwP0>

# 9.30: *Fix You* by Coldplay (4:55)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4V3Mo61fJM>

# 9.31: *What I’ve Done* by Linkin Park (3:27)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sgycukafqQ>

# 9.32: *Bittersweet Symphony* by The Verve (4:37)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lyu1KKwC74>

# 9.33: *Lord Give Me a Sign* by DMX (3:37)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DE9mc0XcFAs>

# 9.34: *Call the Man* by Celine Dion (6:08)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewNLsMdSJOA>

# 9.35: *Jesus Walks* by Kanye West (3:54)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9QEVs20jrg>

# 9.36: *Unanswered Prayers* by Garth Brooks (3:28)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GuA5PZx3K4>

# 9.37: *Learn to Fly* by Foo Fighters (3:57)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dwuzqF6huc>

# 9.38: *Turn! Turn! Turn!* by The Byrds (3:57)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ga_M5Zdn4>

# 9.39: *Sinnerman* by Nina Simone (5:27)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r57J0jPyZRs>

# 9.40: *God’s Gonna Cut You Down* by Johnny Cash (2:50)

# Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQTCS6aWRSc>

**10.0: Videos, Short Films, Movie Clips, Audio Recordings & Photography**

**10.1:** *How could a benevolent god allow evil? Is it really just a matter of free will?* by BBC Radio 4 (2:00)

“The question of evil has troubled theologians and philosophers for millennia. How could a just and loving god allow for human-inflicted evils such as genocide and torture? Are these painful parts of the human experience the inevitable outcome of god-given free will? …This animated short uses comic book-style animations to explore one of philosophy’s most challenging and ubiquitous questions, examining the ‘free will defense’, which some believers in a good god have put forward to explain why we still suffer at each other’s hands.”

Video Link: <https://aeon.co/videos/its-great-to-learn-music-as-a-child-except-when-its-no-fun-at-all>

**10.2:** *Interview with God* by Richard Holdman (3:36)

A creative way of sharing wisdom, whether divine or not.

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/8898059>

**10.3:** *Rituals: The 99 Names of God* by yumna (4:19)

“The 99 Names of God embraces the rhythmic rituals that have run alongside Islamic tradition throughout the centuries in this surreal and poetic short film. Piecing together old and new, I aimed to create dream-like imagery which breathes fresh air to a subject hardly seen in positive light. The importance of geometry, nature, spiritual connectivity, style, meditation, and feminine power in Islamic tradition is something modern media has failed to depict, and my goal was to revive these themes in a truly beautiful manner. Islam’s underlying inherent meditative, universal and spiritual value has been washed over by negative media representation and male-dominated dogmatic imposition. It is time we see new imagery dedicated to truly understanding a religion filled with mysticism and beauty, practiced by over 1.8 billion people around the world.”

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/263856338>

**10.4:** *God Is Kidding* with English Subs by DIGITALBOAZ (7:14)

“The Film illustrates an eternal philosophical question rooted in our sub-conscious and talks about god and faith through the imagination of children. As The film bases itself on interviews with children from the different sectors of Israeli society, we get a wide array of world views represented through the different images of god. Animation makes the subject more approachable for all ages and helps us find the added value of the film through the magical world of children’s imagination.”

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/47096672>

TED Talks

**10.5:** *Letting Go of God* by Julia Sweeney (16:20)

When two young Mormon missionaries knock on Julia Sweeney’s door one day, it touches off a quest to completely rethink her own beliefs, in this excerpt from Sweeney’s solo show “Letting Go of God.”

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/julia_sweeney_letting_go_of_god?>

**10.6:** *Reclaiming Religion* by Rabbi Sharon Brous (16:19)

At a moment when the world seems to be spinning out of control, religion might feel irrelevant -- or like part of the problem. But Rabbi Sharon Brous believes we can reinvent religion to meet the needs of modern life. In this impassioned talk, Brous shares four principles of a revitalized religious practice and offers faith of all kinds as a hopeful counter-narrative to the numbing realities of violence, extremism and pessimism.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/sharon_brous_it_s_time_to_reclaim_religion>

**10.7:** *The Gospel of Doubt* by Casey Gerald (18:12)

What do you do when your firmly held beliefs turn out not to be true? When Casey Gerald’s religion failed him, he searched for something new to believe in -- in business, in government, in philanthropy -- but found only false saviors. In this moving talk, Gerald urges us all to question our beliefs and embrace uncertainty.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/casey_gerald_the_gospel_of_doubt>

**10.8:** *Let’s Teach Religion—All Religion—in Schools* by Dan Dennet (24:33)

Philosopher Dan Dennett calls for religion -- all religion -- to be taught in schools, so we can understand its nature as a natural phenomenon. Then he takes on The Purpose-Driven Life, disputing its claim that, to be moral, one must deny evolution.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_let_s_teach_religion_all_religion_in_schools>

**10.9:** *On Reading the Koran* by Lesley Hazleton (9:19)

Lesley Hazleton sat down one day to read the Koran. And what she found -- as a non-Muslim, a self-identified “tourist” in the Islamic holy book -- wasn’t what she expected. With serious scholarship and warm humor, Hazleton shares the grace, flexibility and mystery she found, in this myth-debunking talk.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/lesley_hazleton_on_reading_the_koran>

**10.10:** *Atheism 2.0* by Alain de Botton (19:05)

What aspects of religion should atheists (respectfully) adopt? Alain de Botton suggests a “religion for atheists”—call it Atheism 2.0—that incorporates religious forms and traditions to satisfy our human need for connection, ritual and transcendence.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/alain_de_botton_atheism_2_0>

**10.11:** *Militant Atheism* by Richard Dawkins (28:59)

Richard Dawkins, a leader of the New Atheism, urges all atheists to openly state their position—and to fight the incursion of the church into politics and science. A fiery, funny, powerful talk.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_dawkins_militant_atheism>

**10.12:** *Is Religion Good or Bad (This is a trick question)* by Kwame Anthony Appiah (14:29)

Plenty of good things are done in the name of religion, and plenty of bad things too. But what is religion, exactly — is it good or bad, in and of itself? Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah offers a generous, surprising view.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question>

**10.13:** *My Failed Mission to Find God and What I Found Instead* by Anjali Kumar (15:57)

Anjali Kumar went looking for God and ended up finding something else entirely. In an uplifting, funny talk about our shared humanity, she takes us on a spiritual pilgrimage to meet witches in New York, a shaman in Peru, an infamous “healer” in Brazil and others, sharing an important lesson: what binds us together is far stronger than what separates us, and our differences are not insurmountable.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/anjali_kumar_my_failed_mission_to_find_god_and_what_i_found_instead>

**10.14:** *12 Truths I Learned from Life and Writing* by Anne Lamott (15:46)

A few days before she turned 61, writer Anne Lamott decided to write down everything she knew for sure. She dives into the nuances of being a human who lives in a confusing, beautiful, emotional world, offering her characteristic life-affirming wisdom and humor on family, writing, the meaning of God, death and more.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_lamott_12_truths_i_learned_from_life_and_writing>

**10.15:** *East vs. West—The Myths That Mystify* by Devdutt Pattanaik (18:11)

Devdutt Pattanaik takes an eye-opening look at the myths of India and of the West—and shows how these two fundamentally different sets of beliefs about God, death and heaven help us consistently misunderstand one another.

Video Link: <https://www.ted.com/talks/devdutt_pattanaik_east_vs_west_the_myths_that_mystify>

**Appendix: Ways of Being Religious / Definitions**

Agnosticism: The belief that there can be no proof of the existence (or non-existence) of God but does not deny the possibility that God exists. British scientist Thomas H. Huxley coined the term in the 1870s. He believed that only material phenomena were objects of exact knowledge. The prefix “a” means “without or not.” The word *gnosis* comes from the Greek and means “knowledge.”

Atheism: The disbelief or denial of the existence of God or gods. From Greek *atheos*, meaning “godless.”

Christian: The belief in a specific notion of God that was developed within the historical context for first Judaism and then Christianity. Typically, the believe is Trinitarian with Jesus Christ being part of the godhead.

Deism: The belief, based solely on reason, in a God who created the world and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, and giving no supernatural revelation.

Henotheism: The belief in one god without denying the existence of other gods. This is the position taken by most Hindus.

Interbeing The Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hahn, introduced this concept. He writes, “When I touch a flower, I touch my consciousness, your consciousness and the great planet Earth at the same time....” This non-theistic view engenders a sense of unity and harmony with the world that borders on mysticism. The focus, however, is our profound and sacred interconnection with the world, and not God.

Mysticism: The desire and activities that seek an experience of union with the divine. This is often achieved through rigorous practice of a particular spiritual discipline like prayer or meditation. Mysticism is at the core of many religious traditions. This experience of union is sometimes referred to as annihilation where the “Self” is lost in the experience of God. Descriptions of mystical experiences tend to be conveyed by love imagery.

Naturalistic

Mysticism: A non-theistic mysticism with nature at its core. See Interbeing.

Neo-

Paganism: One who practices an earth-based spirituality with roots in old European indigenous religions (e.g. druids, celts) or Native American spirituality. Typically the goddess is as important as god, if not more so. The immanence of god/dess is stressed over the transcendence of god/dess. In many indigenous religions a distinction was made between the earth goddess and the sky god--immanence versus transcendence. Often associated with panentheism. (The word pagan meant someone who lived in the country. In like manner, heathen meant someone who lived in the heath. Both were made into derogatory terms by Christianity as a way of marginalizing the beliefs of the indigenous religious that this people practiced.)

Panentheism: One who believes that everything is in God and that God is in everything. It stresses immanence--God within the world--over transcendence--God above and separate from the world. All life is viewed as sacred. The creation spirituality of Matthew Fox is an exploration of panentheism. Fox uses the image of the universe as the divine womb, which contains all such that the way we treat things, nature, place and people is the way we treat God.

Pantheism: A belief that identifies the deity with nature or the universe and all the phenomena that comprises it. It rejects the natural-supernatural dualism and the transcendent nature of God. God is inherent and immanent in all things, the sum of all of the eternal laws in the universe. Baruch Spinoza, a 17th century philosopher, introduced this understanding. (A contemporary variation of this is called scientific pantheism, which sees the universe as divine but not as God.)

Polytheism: The belief in or worship of more than one God.

Secular

Humanism: One who regards humanity as the principle concern of human beings. Typically involves atheism and the belief that the religious enterprise is irredeemably flawed and should be discarded.

Religious

Humanism: One who regards humanity as the principle concern of human beings. Typically involves agnosticism (or atheism) and the belief that the religious enterprise is valuable.

Transcen-

dentalism: A belief in the existence of an ideal spiritual reality that transcends the empirical and scientific and is knowable through intuition.

Theism-

Process: Derived from process theology, this belief in God rejects God as cosmic moralist, as unchanging and passionless absolute, as controlling power, as sanctioner of the status quo, and as male. God is seen, in a sense, as evolving hence the importance of the word process. Aspects of process theism are similar to panentheism.

Theism-

Traditional: Belief in the existence of a god or gods, especially in a personal God as creator and ruler of the universe.

Wicca: A pagan nature religion having its roots in pre-Christian western Europe and undergoing a 20th-century revival, especially in the United States and Great Britain.